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THE KARAITE JEWS

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HISTORY

OF

THE KARAITE JEWS

BY

WILLIAM HARRIS RULE, D.D.

31569

רבי יוסי אומר כל המכבר את התורה גופו מכבד על הבריות
וכל המחלל את התורה גופו מחלל על הבריות:

'What is written in the Law? How readest thou?

LONDON
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1870

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PREFACE.

THE BOOK now presented to English readers is the first volume in our language that has been entirely devoted to the history of Karaite Jews. Writers on Jewish history have usually given a chapter, an appendix, or a few common-place unstudied sentences to this branch of their subject. The subject in itself was deemed interesting, but so scant and imperfect were the materials that it was impossible to treat it satisfactorily.

Two hundred years ago, James Trigland, a learned Dutch theologian, advanced far beyond his predecessors in the study of Karaism. His industry was rewarded by valuable contributions from intelligent Karaites, and two or three other scholars followed his example. Their works or materials collected for further study are contained in the Thesaurus of Sacred Oriental Antiquities, which consists of works on Hebrew and Jewish subjects, brought together by Blasius Ugolinus in thirty-four sumptuous folio volumes, but sealed from the sight of all who cannot or will not break through the Latin and Hebrew swathings that cover those precious remains from the hard-wrought servants of the Press in these busy times. Since Trigland's time little has been done to bring Karaism to light until very recently. Professor

Kosegarten, of the University of Jena, roused the learned again to some feeling of interest by his publication of portions of the 'Book of the Crown of the Law,' by Aaron, son of Elijah the Karaite, with translation and notes, in the year 1824. But this, too, is a Latin book.

The precious materials furnished by Ugolinus and Kosegarten; contributions of travellers within the last half-century; miscellanea collected from other Hebrew sources in the course of study; Karaite liturgies; fragments published from the Firkowitsch manuscripts; all these being duly acknowledged in the following pages, and collated with Biblical and other subsidia of historical study, have enabled the author to essay the composition of what he may presume to call a History of the Karaite Jews.

Dr. Julius Fürst completed last year his 'Geschichte des Karaërthums,' the fruit of much patient labour. It is chiefly an account of eminent Karaites, obtained from the mass of manuscript literature now referred to, and laid up in the libraries of Odessa and St. Petersburg, added to the little that had been previously extant in Europe. Fürst's history is not only valuable on its own account, but is an extremely useful aid to study with the 'Anmerkungen,' or passages extracted from the Hebrew originals, and most copious references to those originals, from first to last. That work is entirely different from the present in its arrangement, and if it is ever translated into English, as it well deserves to be, the object pursued and course taken in each of the Histories will be found entirely distinct and independent.

By whomsoever written, the history of the Karaites

is comparative. They are a people honourably known by faithful maintenance of the principle of submission to acknowledged authority, and also by firmness in exercising their own reason in order to ascertain the sufficiency of that which claims to be authoritative. Nothing with them is authoritative which is not Divine—God only is to them the fountain of authority. They profess willingness to submit to Him, and to submit at any cost. This is the normal principle of Karaism. Submission to human authority in matters of faith and religious duty, unless that authority be manifestly supported by Divine Revelation, they justly consider to be no better than blind and servile superstition.

They pay unbounded reverence to the Written Law of God, contained in the Old Testament. They utterly reject what is called the Oral Law, and is now contained in the Talmud—at least, so far as it can be made out by those who spend their life in learning.

The Talmud, however, is but the latest edition of the Oral Law—the last collection of traditions and miscellaneous writings for the illustration or exposition of the traditional sentences; and we have now to mark the divergence of two parties—the faithful followers of God's Law, and the votaries of human tradition. In other words, we have to trace the progress of a schism from the beginning; and to select at discretion a point from which to commence the story anywhere along the widely wandering lines of progress would be to lose sight of all that gave its peculiar character to the schism itself, from first to last. Hence arose a necessity for the first eight chapters of this book, from Chapter I., which defines the canon of

Inspired Scripture, to Chapter VIII., which briefly characterises the body of traditions: that is to say, from the point where all Israelites were once agreed, onward to the opposite brinks of the great gulf of an impassable division.

A deliberate survey of the gradual progress and consummation of the Karaite schism obviates the controversy that would otherwise arise, and prevents difficulties otherwise insoluble; whereas, to begin our history with Ahnan, for example, and to date the origin of Karaism from the year 750, or even at the beginning of the Christian era, would be contrary to every known antecedent, would shift us on to ground utterly untenable, and would, if that were possible, reduce one of the most important divisions recorded in the religious history of the Hebrew people to the insignificance of an unquiet uprising against ecclesiastical authority. This is what the Rabbanites might wish to do, but justice and truth forbid us to attempt it. That would now be impossible.

Neither may we consent to darken history by taking up the allegation that the Karaites are descended from the Sadducees. A dispassionate survey of the whole period from the closing of the Canon of the Old Testament by Simon the Just to the compilation of the Mishnah, while it shows what influences operated on the Jewish mind, and tended to bring about the decisive separation of two great parties, makes it clear as day that Sadduceeism and Karaism are just as contrary the one to the other as unbelief and faith. On this ground the author takes his stand without fear of successful contradiction, and here he differs from Jost and some other

historians, and from the Rabbanites both ancient and modern. As to the alleged Sadduceeanism of the earlier Karaites, which is maintained by some, Fürst for example, who yet acknowledge their historical antiquity, the author reiterates an unqualified dissent, and hopes that his justification will be found in the history that is to follow.

With regard to the date of Karaism, so far as it may be indicated by its name, one or two observations should be made in addition to what has been said in the body of this book.

A sect suddenly sprung up after the nomenclature of Judaism was settled, when the extension of any one sect over the vast areas of the dispersion became difficult, if not impossible, would have borne a name of reproach, if given by their enemies; while a name of honour, if assumed by themselves, would have been disputed; or a descriptive designation, if generally allowed, would have borne some special mark significant of local origin or of a dogmatic or political characteristic. But in the present instance there is no such name acknowledged, and even in the Babylonian Talmud a man of distinction for wisdom or learning is called a *Reader* (Karaite) קראי, or it is said that such an one *reads* (קרא). In the earlier Jerusalem Talmud, the expression 'Go and read' is of not unfrequent occurrence, both Talmuds agreeing in the same style. Rashi is quoted as saying that many eminent scholars were solemnly ordained with the title of *Master of the Reading* (בעל המקרא), the very title borne by Karaites. Perhaps on this account it is so often noted that Rabbi Khaninah *reads*, although the common form

would be that Rabbi such an one *says* thus and thus.[1] For some centuries, therefore, the honourable title retained its place, evidently to distinguish him who quotes or recites the Law as he reads it, from him who appeals to the Tradition.

As if to countenance the idea that the origin of Karaites may be dated so late as the eighth century, they are sometimes called Ahnanites by their antagonists, and although they never so call themselves, they so respect this man's memory as not to repudiate his name when it is put upon them. Still they only submit in silence, for it is not their proper name, and the celebrated Arab geographer and historian Ab-ul-Fedá expressly marks the Ahnanites as entirely distinct from both the Rabbanites and the Karaites. He says that they take their name from Ahnan, son of David, chief of the captivity. He even marks their doctrine so strongly as to show that their teacher was, properly speaking, an innovator among them, one of those Palestinian Jews, of whom there is mention in our sixth chapter, who were brought under strongly Christian influence; that he taught his followers to acknowledge the discourses and parables of Christ as true and prophetic; that they honoured the Pentateuch, and said all men should be recommended to read it, and that Jesus Himself was one of the Prophets of Israel, but that they religiously observed the Law of Moses. In common with the Karaites, they said, according to Ab-ul-Fedá, that Jesus never put Himself forward as a messenger of God, or author of a new law that should set aside the Law of Moses, but professed Himself to be

[1] Frankel, מבוא הירושלמי, fol. קיט. Vratislaviæ, 1870.

no more than one of those holy men who sincerely devote themselves to God.[1]

How far the Karaite congregations may sometimes have received Christian impressions the reader is invited to judge for himself, and future studies may more distinctly ascertain, but the secondary influences of Karaism in relation to Christianity are indubitable. The subject of the fourteenth chapter, Karaism in Spain, cannot fail to attract attention, especially in relation to the Helvetian and Gallic varieties of the Christian Reformation of the sixteenth century. The author hopes that future research may throw some light on the entire question of the influence of Karaite principles on the Reformation in the South of Europe. How far, again, may not the present history afford illustration of the spirit of parties in the conflict between the claims of Holy Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition which is repeated in our own day. The pen of Rabbi Aaron, son of Elijah, may now be borrowed with advantage, and the author remembers how, thirty years ago, he translated into Spanish for the benefit of Spain the eloquent portraiture of Jewish traditionism from the Hebrew of the 'Crown of the Law' by that accomplished Karaite. He has again translated it into English for the information of his own countrymen.

With regard to the execution of this work, he can only say that it has cost him much labour, and that, while he has done his utmost to avoid mistakes, and trusts that he has not been quite unsuccessful in any matter of main importance, he will be thankful to any one who can assist him in detecting such errors and defects as are

[1] Fleischer, *Abulfedæ Historia Anteislamica*, p. 161. Lips. 1831.

almost inseparable from the reproduction of rare and remote intelligence. The book is but small, but should a second edition be called for, enlightening criticism, whether friendly or adverse, on any doubtful questions, whether it proceeds from Jew or Christian, shall not be overlooked.

W. H. R.

CROYDON:
April 7th, 1870.

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FACSIMILE

FROM A MS. OF THE 10TH CENTURY, AT ODESSA, WITH THE VOWEL POINTS USUALLY CALLED 'ASSYRIAN OR BABYLONIAN' . . . . . *To face page* 102

HISTORY

OF

THE KARAITE JEWS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

A CHRISTIAN STUDENT undertakes to investigate the history of a portion of the Hebrew people whom their brethren usually regard as heretics. He entered on the subject with the single desire to ascertain the facts of history, and with no ulterior object except that of publishing a trustworthy account of one of the most interesting, yet least known, of religious bodies. He writes under an ever-strengthening feeling of respect to his Hebrew brethren—a feeling so proper to be entertained, that it would be superfluous to make the least profession of it, if it were not for the sake of bespeaking the confidence of any Jew into whose hands this book may fall. He is not writing to make proselytes, much as he wishes that every Jew were a Christian; and whatever may have to be said will be said freely. It may be understood at once that he is no traditionist,—that he shall not attempt to tone down any sentiment he entertains, nor to soften away any feature of the portraiture he endeavours to delineate.

There will be no temptation to such an expedient, because there is nothing likely to be said that could possibly offend either of the two parties concerned, and he has never had a Jewish friend who would wish him to forget that he is a Christian. Let this now be said once for all.

There can be but one reason for Karaism; namely, reverence for the written Law of God—such profound and undivided reverence as requires the rejection of what is called the Oral Law. The Law of God, as written in the Five Books of Moses, and in the other books of Holy Scripture onward to the latest of the Prophets, is acknowledged by *us all* to be divinely inspired, and of divine authority. It is necessary, however, to introduce the subject to the attention of the reader by a few thoughts on our common standard, *the Canon of the Old Testament.* In this sacred volume lies the point at which we converge in cordial agreement, and at which the two sections of Jewry again diverge—'the sons of the Scripture' and 'the masters of tradition.'

The Karaites are the sons of the Scripture, or, as they prefer to say, בני מקרא, *sons of the Reading,* or *text* of the Old Testament. Yet, when we look into the matter closely, we detect a considerable difference between the Jewish and the Christian view of it; but, to avoid confusion, let us now suppose that we take our stand side by side with a devout Israelite, a few years before the destruction of the second Temple, and before the books of the New Testament were any of them known to be written. At that time the Hebrew Scriptures were *not yet* accepted by our spiritual fathers as of equal authority. Indeed, such authority was not yet given to them. They were not spoken of by the Jews as one homogeneous collection, but as three—the *Law,* the *Prophets,* and the *Psalms.* So they were called by our Lord. So they stand in the Hebrew Bibles. Neither Jew nor Christian

could receive any one of the three, nor any part of that one without a divine and final authentication. Such an authentication had not then been given, but it was given gradually, and had to be confirmed.

First, THE LAW, or Five Books of Moses.—The inspired writer of those books stood before the world in a character never before sustained by any man. He was commissioned by the Lord Himself to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. He executed that commission with every mark of authority, to prove that God was with him. He received a divine Law for the people whom he led out of Egypt. At every step miracle attended him. To him and to 'Jacob,' whom he led like a flock, the sea-bed and the burning desert were equally made passable. Shelter, sustenance, guidance, and victory were afforded to a multitude feeble, empty, and without weapons of war, or foresight, or any adequate degree of skill, even in the most favourable circumstances. The very course of nature was suspended for forty years, and one of the last things which Moses did was to write this 'Law,' consisting of a marvellous historical preamble setting forth the great events which most concerned humanity—the creation of the world; the relations that subsisted between God and man for many ages; the Fall; the expulsion from Paradise; the Deluge; the post-diluvian families of men; the call of Abraham; the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Egyptian captivity, and the deliverance from Egypt. Then came the giving of the Law, with the twofold object of separating the chosen people from the heathen, and of establishing a form for solemn worship of the one true God. A full account of this was necessarily inclusive of much continuous history. This history could not be doubted. The divine sanctions of the entire system were visible and indisputable. The Pentateuch, תורה *law*, was irresistibly accepted as divine. It was preserved with

most religious care. It, and it only, was laid up in the ark by divine command. Its precepts were to be obeyed by all. They only who fell away into idolatry cast off its restraint, and when such apostasy became general, the nation fell.

After the Law, THE PROPHETS.

The former Prophets, נביאים ראשונים, or historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.—These writings of men justly reputed to be inspired, and therefore called prophets, were accepted as authentic muniments of sacred history, written in continuation of the Mosaic history itself, and were preserved and cherished with the strongest feelings of patriotism and piety.

The latter Prophets, נביאים אחרונים, are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi. While the books classed together in the preceding division contain the history of Israel and Judah from the decease of Moses down to the Babylonish captivity, these 'latter Prophets' have the authorship of those inspired messengers whom the Lord sent to his people from the time when the Assyrians began to desolate their country and burn their cities, and whom He continued to send until Malachi delivered the last prophetic announcement about four centuries before the birth of Christ.

THE SCRIPTURES, כתובים, or PSALMS, as they are also called in the New Testament, because the Psalter is the first of them, constitute the last division of the Old Testament. They are the Book of Psalms, written by various persons besides David, the Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. This division is miscellaneous. The Psalms, written at various times, are collected into one book. Job is a personal narrative, whereon the sacred writer framed a didactic composition. Ruth is an

historical episode. Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes are instructive writings from the pen of Solomon, who could not fitly be counted with the Prophets. The Chronicles were regarded as secondary to the Book of Kings. Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah are historical writings, relating to events after the captivity, and for that reason they were not counted with the latter Prophets, although written before the last of them. The Book of Daniel is intensely prophetic, and therefore entitled to class with Isaiah and the rest; but, as a captivity-book, and written by one of whom it was not said that *the word of the Lord came to him*, and who in his life did not bear the prophetic title, although eminently worthy of it, as our Lord Himself afterwards signified by calling him 'Daniel the Prophet,' the book of history and visions written by him was placed in this miscellaneous collection of sacred writings. It would be untrue, and therefore unjust and unhistorical, to accuse the men of the Great Synagogue—of whom I shall speak presently—of undervaluing Daniel, and placing his writings in an inferior position, because of the clear predictions of the Saviour which he records, and the chronological periods which, it is alleged, would be disagreeable for them to calculate. All this arrangement was made, and the canon closed accordingly, more than three hundred years before Christ. The Jews, therefore, who rejected the Saviour had nothing to do with the allocation of the Book of Daniel in the latest division of the Old Testament, nor is there the slightest intimation of blame on this account, either against them or their fathers. The inspiration and authority of these books was not called in question, but the classification itself was distinctly recognised by our Lord when He made mention of 'the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms,' and the honourable rank of the Hagiographa was sufficiently maintained when He applied their

proper title, *Scriptures*, to the whole code of ancient revelation, saying, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me.'

Some further observation on this canon is necessary to our present purpose, for the Old Testament was the standard of Hebrew faith, and an enlargement of the final standard of canonicity attempted soon after its publication gave rise to the great controversy that will engage our attention.

Down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 166), the LAW was read in the Temple on high festivities, and in the synagogues every Sabbath-day, for which purpose it was divided into fifty-four sections, פרשיות; and it is said that when Antiochus had forbidden the reading of the Law, and endeavoured to destroy the Law itself, as well as to prevent its observance, the Jews selected an equal number of lessons, הפטרות, out of the Prophets, to be read instead. Whenever the reading of the Prophets began, it is certainly mentioned in the New Testament, and it is equally certain that the institution of this reading of the Prophets was subsequent to the complete collection of the prophetic Scriptures. The last division of the Old Testament was not so used, but it enters largely into the Liturgies which began in the times of Ezra and his successors.[1]

[1] Rabbi Bechai writes thus concerning the prayer which they call *The Eighteen Petitions*:—'You must know that from the time of Moses, our master, until the men of the Great Synagogue, there was not any form of prayer in Israel, but each man made a prayer for himself, and prayed alone, according to his own knowledge, wisdom, and eloquence, until the men of the Great Synagogue came, and composed the שמנה עשרה (*Eighteen*), that the Israelites might have an equal and common form of prayer. Wherefore also they conceived it in the most simple and easy language, that the mind and heart might not be distracted about the meaning of words; and that all Israelites, learned and wise, unlettered and rude, might use the same form.'—*Johan. Buxtorfii Patris Synagoga Judaica*, cap. x.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and after them the high priests in succession until Simon the Just, were at the head of what is called the Great Synagogue. Those two great restorers of city and Temple were above all things careful to establish the reading and observance of the Law, and would also be careful to preserve and promote the reading of the prophetic books, all which they possessed, except the Book of Malachi. Their successors collated copies of the writings which were to supplement the Law, which foretold the fulfilment of its object, and were to be the standard of faith and rule of life, until that standard should be crowned by the Divine Founder of a more perfect Church, whom the Law prefigured and to whom the Prophets all bare witness. Doubtless the men of the Great Synagogue rejected much that their sacred study indisposed them to receive, but they were not inspired; they certainly did well, but they could do no more than apply such tests as are continually applied by the learned and the wise. Their decision as to what ought to be received into the list was not final, and could not be authoritative until a superior judge had confirmed their judgment.

Simon the Just closed the collection,[1] but he could not set to it the seal of unquestionable authentication. He could not produce credentials like those of Moses. He wrought not any miracle, neither did he utter any prophecy, but he represented the highest order of uninspired men, and delivered the collective suffrage of their learning, sincerity, and piety. He commended these books to the acceptance of his nation, and it is to be noted that no one after him ever presumed to add another. The Law, the Prophets, and the Scriptures were soon translated into Greek, and the Law, at least, into Chaldee, before One came with power to stamp the canon with final sanction.

[1] This is according to the generally received tradition.

Greek Jews wrote, and Greeks accepted, certain books which are known as apocryphal, but were not acknowledged by the Jews as worthy of reception in the synagogues, nor are they yet regarded as of much value. Their historical merits are various, their number uncertain, and the contents of some erroneous and trifling. None of them were acknowledged by our Lord Jesus, whereas He and his disciples quoted or referred to all the books collected by the predecessors of Simon the Just, and included in his list or canon, except two, perhaps three of the minor Scriptures in the last division, —a very unimportant omission. Our faith in their authority is thus confirmed, and we can venture to fix on the date B.C. 340–320 as a time when there was not yet any open divergence from the sole authority of the written Law of God in the teaching of the Jewish doctors. We consider it indisputable that to the mind of the Hebrew nation at that time the Scriptures of the Old Testament contained all that could be regarded as of divine authority—all that the Israelite was bound to obey. If there was any lurking notion of an oral law, there was no claim put forth on its behalf, no traditionists, no Pharisees. On the contrary, the labours of the most exalted and venerated men in all the nation swayed such an influence that if any distinguishing name could be given to the people with whom no new sectarianism was as yet established, we might call them Scripturists, as indeed they were. Reverence of Holy Scripture was coextensive with the profession of earnest piety, apart from all varying opinions; the Word of God was exclusive and absolute.

But godliness decayed; men solemnly consecrated to the service of the altar gave themselves to inferior studies; the 'Great Synagogue' having ceased, the Sanhedrim arose, and its chiefs pretended to an oracular

wisdom with which they might prosecute an unfinished labour of their fathers; unanimity was broken, as we shall see presently, and it became necessary that a divine authority should interpose on the side of authentic revelation against human traditions, and, by a decisive sentence, obviate all pretext for doubt in future as to the sufficiency of the writings which mankind at large might confidently believe to be of God.

This is what our Saviour did. He constantly quoted the Sacred Books with such expressions of honour and submission as to assure both Jews and Gentiles that they were written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that all who would hope to escape condemnation in the Day of Judgment must receive them as such. Those Scriptures were the only code of revealed truth at the first promulgation of Christianity, whose Divine Founder and his servants appealed to them for attestation of his mission, and for support of their arguments in the defence and advancement of his Gospel. On this ancient foundation rested the fabric of Christianity. Without the Law and the Prophets the New Testament, as it is, could not have been written, nor the way prepared for 'the Lord.' His way being thus laid open, the marvellous dispensation of redeeming mercy was established; a new class of supernatural evidence was afforded; the fountain of inspiration, after being closed for centuries, was opened again; the canon of the New Testament in due time followed, in addition to that of the Old, and the entire Bible was given to the whole world. Moses, the Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles united to deliver a mass of independent, yet concurrent evidences of one unchanging and imperishable truth, and thus each portion of the incomparable volume sheds light on all the rest. By this our faith abides, and it is now needless to recount the assaults it has withstood and the conquests it

has won. Generations of men pass away in withering age. The Word of the Lord flourishes as in an ever-freshening youth.

Such is the result of the authentication of the Old Testament by means of the New, and whoever would fully apprehend the necessity of such an authentication has only to read the history of more than four hundred years that elapsed between the last of the Prophets and the first of the Evangelists. During that period the unreserved confession of the Law of God was well-nigh forgotten, and the rudiments of what they call the *repetition* of it, but in reality the *subversion*, were fully developed, and only required assortment into a system to become practically rival and subversive, as they afterwards proved to be.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNINGS OF SCHISM.

A KARAITE, author of the Tract חלוק, *Schism*, which was read in manuscript by J. Trigland,[1] finds the source of Rabbanism in facts related by some of the latter Prophets. From those trusty witnesses he describes the moral state of the Jews between the return from Babylon and the date of the Book of Malachi. In copying his sentences I shall perhaps fall into his style.

1. *The doctors of the Law were guilty of great negligence.*—The priests, whose lips should have kept knowledge, that the people might seek the law at their mouth, themselves wandered out of the way, caused many to stumble at the law, and corrupted the covenant of Levi. (Mal. ii. 7, 8.) The people fell away after the ill example of their teachers, who were guilty of negligence and contempt of God's service; and while they dwelt in cieled houses, left the Lord's house to lie waste. (Hag. i. 4.) Grown insolent at last, their words were stout against the Lord. 'It is vain,' said they, 'to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and

[1] *J. Triglandii Diatribe de Secta Karræorum*, cap. vii. Trigland was professor of theology in Leyden in the latter part of the seventeenth century. His attention had been drawn by a learned friend to the Karaites, whose history was then almost unknown. He prosecuted his inquiries with great earnestness, depending entirely on the Karaites themselves for information. I have to acknowledge myself much indebted to his invaluable dissertation.

have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?' They called the proud happy, and insolently murmured that even they who provoked God to anger did so with impunity. (Mal. iii. 13–15.)

2. *The judges were corrupt.*—They spake falsehood every man to his neighbour; they did not execute the judgment of truth and peace in their gates. They imagined evil in their hearts, and loved false oaths. (Zech. viii. 16, 17.) They encouraged sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers, and those that oppressed the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless. They turned aside the stranger from his right, having no fear of God. (Mal. iii. 5.) Therefore they were made contemptible and base before all the people, because they did not keep God's ways, but were partial in the law. (Mal. ii. 9.)

3. *The solemnities of Divine worship and the sanctities of religion were generally set at nought*, as is clearly apparent in the prophetic writings of that period.

The '*wise men*,' instead of betaking themselves to penitential humiliation and prayer, and earnestly striving to arouse both priests and people to amend their lives, faithfully teaching them the will of God as made known by Himself, so following many bright examples, those self-called wise men departed from the Fountain of Truth, secretly forsook the one Source of living Power, and set about devising new methods of reformation which might seem plausible, but were unauthorised and dangerous; just like many devices among us Christians in later times, wherewith some of us have wickedly attempted to supplement the revealed Word of God, as if—as we profanely fancied—the Gospel were not by itself sufficient for adaptation to the new and shifting exigencies of our own day. This was the error of the Jews.

As this author affirms, the Rabbis of a succeeding age endeavoured to meet the threefold declension with a

threefold remedy; namely, to make many disciples; to be slow and considerate in judgment; to make a hedge to the Law. Now, these measures might be good if they were rightly devised, well understood, and well carried into practice; but, as intended and understood by the Rabbis, they were at best utterly insufficient. As carried into practice, they were as bad as the worst enemy of God or man could wish to make them. Men were set to establish their own righteousness by the mechanism of a new method, and from all that could be gathered from these maxims, the Holy Bible might have been sealed up at every section, and the gates of Divine mercy closed for ever. But these three remedies were prescribed, and in plain words the prescription was graven at the head of what they call the *Oral Law*. Every well-educated Jew knows what that Law is, and where to set his finger on the tradition following:—'Moses received the Law at Sinai, and delivered it to Joshua; Joshua to the Elders; the Elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets delivered it to the men of the Great Synagogue, who spake these words (or commandments), "*Be ye slow in judgment; constitute many disciples; make a hedge to the Law.*"'[1]

The last of these injunctions is the worst. Not the names of men, but 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower, and the righteous who runneth into it is safe.' But those over-busy zealots for the safety of Israel vainly thought to throw up a crazy outwork of their own around the Tower of Strength—to raise a frail *tapia* of clay, far in advance of the Rock of Ages, that the deserted flocks, left without shepherds, might run into that for shelter; not foreseeing that, inclosed there, and overtaken by the destroyers, they would perish under their 'hedge of the

[1] *Pirkēy Aboth*, cap. i. 1.

Law.' They wrought folly indeed, and now the fatal consequence is too notorious. Instead of the fortress of eternal truth, those *Tanaim*—doctors of tradition—did no more than prepare for coming generations an ever-crumbling heap of their own empty sayings.

But the catalogue of sins that prevailed, even in the lifetime of the Prophets, is not yet exhausted. The author of Hillúk proceeds:—

4. *Men gave themselves over again to the study of things relating to strange gods,* as is plainly written in the Book of Malachi.—This is overlooked when we repeat what we have often heard, and too readily believe, that the Jews did not relapse into idolatry after the Babylonish captivity. The Prophet's words are these: 'Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.' (Mal. ii. 11.) This language is too plain to be mistaken, and the Karaite is entirely supported by the Septuagint, which thus translates the last decisive words:—*ἐπετήδευσεν εἰς θεοὺς ἀλλοτρίους*, '*he hath studiously gone after strange gods.*' It is true that they did not again set up idols and construct chambers of imagery in Jerusalem, as in times before that captivity; but they continually deserted to paganism, and many of them—the Herodians, for example, in the time of our Lord's ministry—lived more like heathens than Jews, Judah marrying, so to speak, the daughter of a strange god.

5. *They treated their wives cruelly.*—'The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.' (Mal. ii. 14.) The Karaite understood this literally, and whether his interpretation is correct or not, he was too honest to

cloke the disgraceful fact under the veil of metaphor. He knew that the hearts of the Israelites were not softer in the days of Malachi than in those of Moses. How cruelly the Jews divorced their wives for no sufficient cause is notorious.

6. *They were guilty of Sabbath-breaking,* as is evident from the full account of their proceedings given by Nehemiah (xiii. 15–22), who could not restrain the people under his government by persuasion, and had to employ force to maintain order in Jerusalem on Sabbath-days. They were nothing improved since the time of Isaiah.

7. *They contracted marriages with the heathen,* as we learn from the same history (Nehem. xiii. 23–29), and so fell into the inevitable snare of idolatry, as we have been just now reminded.

The Karaites do not deny that the wise men endeavoured to prevent these sins, but complain that they set about counteracting them by adding to the Law supplementary injunctions of their own, whereas they ought to have enforced the Law as it stood, and should have accompanied the administration of healthful discipline with faithful instructions and holy example. For instance, in order to enforce the right observance of the Sabbath-day, they added שבות, *sabbath-keepings,* directing that some portion of a common day should be added to the Sabbath-day, which is actually done by ordaining a three hours' preparation. [How far this can fairly be called a Sabbath-keeping must depend on the manner of observance; but the question is for Karaites and Rabbanites to decide between themselves, although we cannot but observe that there is express mention of the *preparation* in the Gospels (Matt. xxvii. 62), without a word of disapproval.] And, to prevent the doing of work on that day, they went beyond the explicit direction of the Decalogue, for that which is prohibited is מלאכה, *ordinary business,* and they

made it unlawful to swim in water, or to climb a tree. Not content with enforcing that prohibition which restrains the priest from marrying a heathen woman, they made it criminal for him to marry a Hebrew woman that had been unfortunately carried captive into a heathen country, or otherwise associated, however unwillingly, with even heathen women in her own land. It is notorious that some of their most eminent and holiest ancestors, Moses for example, married heathen women without incurring censure, but the sages who pretended to supply deficiencies in the Law of God endeavoured to enforce their own gratuitous commandment, and did great mischief. Hence their offensive conduct towards Hyrcanus. [Here, again, the Karaite must be watched as well as his antagonists, and we must not forget what was indeed the law concerning intermarriages with Hebrews and Gentiles.] Full of the fatal notion of supplementing God's law, in order to make it stronger or easier to be conveniently administered, they called the devotees of this voluntary religion חסידים, *Khasidim*, *Asidæans*, *Essenes*, or *Religious*, and gave them the very questionable praise of being עוסקים ברבית התורה, *studious of the increase of the Law*, which some think accounts for the epithet רבנים, *Rabanim*, which would be understood to mean *Increasers*. Hence we say *Rabbanites* not Rabbinists.

Consequently, while volunteering an excessive study to enlarge that exceeding broad commandment which, in truth, reaches to every secret thought and intent of the heart, they lost the wheat among the chaff, or they mistook chaff for wheat. Some, like the Sadducees, ceased to believe the truth itself, their understanding being strained and warped by an unhealthy habit of contention. In time, people ignorantly retained supplementary statutes, and overlooked original commandments. Others, attaching themselves to the Essenes, who were indeed

'righteous overmuch,' neglected the holy services of the Temple, and gave themselves to a sort of philosophical retreat, with meditation,—'spiritual exercises' is the special phrase,—and to the promotion of particular virtues, such as charity to the poor,[1] placing religion in that one thing, with emulation of Pythagoras and Plato, rather than obedience to Moses. So it was even in the days of Jeremiah, who therefore writes: 'What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.' (Jer. xxiii. 28–31).

So far we follow the strictures in the Karaite tract on schism, and now we observe that some of the grossest forms of misbelief have been provoked by the refined officiousness which labours to make faith easy by some hasty illustration, or novel method. The Sadducean heresy had such a beginning. In the first of the 'Chapters of the Fathers' we read that one Antigonus, a man of Socoh, (the place mentioned in Joshua xv. 35), a disciple of Simon the Just, was used to say to his disciples, 'Be not like servants who serve their master well in hope of receiving פרס (*a gift*,[2] or present); but be like servants who serve their masters with the understanding that they will not receive any gift, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you. The saying was, no doubt, characteristic of the speaker, for as such it is preserved in the Mishnah, and is

[1] Dwelling, perhaps, on the literal meaning of a word, as צדקה, in a few places in the Old Testament (δικαιοσύνη in Matt. vi. 1), for benevolence or alms-giving.

[2] This word is quite different from שכר, *wages*.

perfectly clear and unobjectionable, but it may have been so repeated, enforced, and enlarged upon, as to convey a very false impression. Not *presents*, to quicken the diligence of a mercenary hireling, but *wages* promised to a faithful servant and bestowed of grace, not debt, are to be expected at the Last Day. Some of the hearers of Antigonus, whether by his fault or their own, did not perceive the difference. As two of them, Sadok and Baithos, left his presence, they fell into conversation on this favourite maxim of his. 'Our master,' said Sadok, 'evidently believes that however well a man may do, he must not expect any reward at all, and that if he does badly, he needs not be afraid of punishment.' To this conclusion Baithos assented. Fortifying each other in unbelief, they both withdrew from his instructions, and began to propagate their heresy.

The Jews tell us that Sadok did not believe in angel or spirit, nor in the resurrection at the Last Day. His name passed on to his disciples the *Sadokim*, or Sadducees. The Rabbis are wont to associate the two names, and call such infidels Sadducæans and Baithosians, so keeping the Mishnaic legend in remembrance. Maimonides says that the opinions of the two heretics differed widely, and that each became head of a separate sect. He adds—but that is mere invention—that although the Sadducees were all agreed in denying the resurrection of the dead, they eventually agreed again to renounce that article of disbelief, and adopt the current faith in order to avoid the scandal of infidelity. Still, according to the same fable, they persisted in denying the Oral Law, and in casting off its constitutions and observances. 'From these,' says the son of Maimon, 'came those accursed heretics, the Karaites, but our wise men call them Sadokites and Baithosites.' These are they who declaim against tradition, and expound Holy Scripture after their

own mind, having rejected the decisions of the wise, contrary to what is written, 'Thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.' (Deut. xvii. 9-11.)

To this the heretics retorted, not without reason, that the traditions the Rabbis endeavoured to enforce were perversions of the Law which they were appointed to explain, as judges that should sit in Moses' seat.

On this narrative of the rise of the Sadducean sect, I have only to note that it is only introduced here for the sake of saying that the alleged identity of Sadducees and Karaites is fabulous. The disciples of Sadok followed their master in dogged unbelief, but the Karaites, who followed no man, had no master from whom they could receive a name. The Sadducees left the orthodox teachers of the synagogue on the question of eternal reward and punishment after the resurrection of the dead. The Karaites gradually severed themselves from communion with their brethren on the single question of tradition. There is no coincidence of time, place, or doctrine to justify a confusion of the two. The Karaites are of all the Jews most loyal to Moses' Law, whereas the Sadducees were among the least faithful to it.

The heresy of Sadok, however, called forth an emphatic profession of the truth which he denied, for then it was

that instead of the single word מעולם, *from everlasting*, repeated at the close of prayers in the Temple and synagogue services, there was introduced a fuller form (מעולם עד העולם), *from everlasting to everlasting*. This was to signify that there are two worlds, or ages, the past and the future, and to enable the whole congregation to proclaim with one voice that as there was an eternity past, so after the resurrection there will come a second and eternal state of being. The echo of this grand suffrage is daily heard in our own Christian assemblies when they respond, 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.'

If the Karaite question had been treated as fairly as the Sadducean, and the alternative of abiding either by the Law of God or the traditions of men had been considered honestly as a purely religious question, the decision might have tended to the universal acknowledgment of a cardinal truth, diverting the entire course of Jewish history into a different channel. But it was not so. Controversy on a religious question was the hypocritical pretext, at the period which we now approach, for a conflict between bigot and infidel where the real motives were personal hatred and party antagonism.

There was an interval of nearly two centuries between the secession of Sadok from the school of Antigonus and the outburst of revolt against the government of Hyrcanus which led to the eventual establishment of Karaism, for which no date can possibly be assigned, inasmuch as there is no account of any critical conjuncture—no moment of transition. We shall however see that learned men whose only sources of information were the writings of Rabbanites were utterly misled when they described the Karaites as reformed Sadducees, and that

the modern writers who represent Ahnan as founder of a Karaite sect are equally mistaken.[1]

[1] The Karaites, like other persons who degenerate into partisans even while their cause is good, have sometimes called *themselves* righteous. It is said that once, having built a new synagogue in Constantinople, they wrote over the entrance:

זה השער ליהוה
צדיקים יבאו בו

This gate is of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. But the night before the synagogue was to be used for worship, while the parties concerned were asleep, some wicked Rabbanite, clever at stone-work, managed to lengthen a stroke, and before day dawned upon those that should enter the gate, there was displayed on it another word in full—צדוקים—SADDUCEES.

CHAPTER III.

HYRCANUS, JANNAI, AND BEN SHETAKH.

AFTER the victories of the Maccabees over their Syro-Grecian tyrants, Judea rose again into the condition of a kingdom—feeble indeed, yet a kingdom. The newly created royalty was in a dependence on Rome very like vassalage. Simon was the first who bore the name of king in this humiliating relation. John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, succeeded to his father, and in time attained to the twofold dignity of high priest and king, for the priests and elders had been pleased to decide that the crown and mitre should be worn by the same person, and that this royal pontificate should be hereditary. So they created for themselves a mock theocracy. Under the sublime theocracy of Moses and of David, God was King indeed. He elected men to serve Him as kings choose their ministers. He gave the laws for civil government, and appointed one of his own servants to be king and captain of the people. His voice gave command for the army to march; his sword transfixed Israel's enemies. He held his court at the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, amidst august solemnities, such as no earthly sovereign ever had around him, nor ever could have. That King was holy, omnipotent, eternal. Heaven and earth were filled with the majesty of his glory. There, in the same Jerusalem, after the glory had departed, when the visible splendour was extinguished, and the

moral grandeur lost, John Hyrcanus became the mimic theocrat. Moses, when marching in a path made by the advancing pillar of glory, was far less in his own eyes than John Hyrcanus, the Jewish tributary to pagan Rome.

He was in the twenty-eighth year of his kingship, and fortieth of his high-priesthood. Under the tutelage of the Roman Senate, and after a succession of victories, it pleased him to make a splendid banquet for the entertainment of his princes and ministers, with the officers of the little army of Judah and Benjamin, and a numerous assemblage of Wise Men. These were the governors of his earthly kingdom, the captains of the army of which he was general, and the hierarchy over whom he ruled as pontiff.

When he had well drunk, and his heart was merry with wine, the festive company seemed to him as grand as the multitude of princes and lords who feasted around Belshazzar in the palace of Babylon; so he felt able to give free vent to the conceit which had grown strong within him, and began to recount the multitude of good and honourable works that he had done. He took praise to himself for uprightness, justice, and beneficence. None presumed to contradict him, but the cold smiles of some, and the servile applause of others, persuaded him that he had the cordial consent of all. After this oration a few more wine-draughts sank him into a mood of sweet humility, and in this happy state he appealed to all the reverend sages there present, to say whether he had not always willingly received their correction and reproof for any bad or wicked action he had happened to commit. Then the Wise Men gave the response expected, praising him aloud. Their spokesman rose during the acclamation, and, as it subsided, began his due address. 'Thou hast told the truth, O king! For indeed thou art just,

and upright, and faithful. Thou art a servant of God, and his high priest, therefore praise and dominion become thee well.' The king received the incense with complacent thoughtfulness, while the company waited his reply, and there being no second voice to interrupt the pause, he answered most graciously to this effect: 'I will always listen to your words. I will welcome your reproof whenever I have done anything beyond the bound that limits what a righteous judge should do.'

Either emboldened by the royal declaration of submission, even humble submission to reproof, or moved by a sense of his master's hypocrisy, a Wise Man named Eliezer boldly rose, and gave utterance to thoughts long pent up within his bosom.

'O King Hyrcanus, live for ever! If thou art so wishful to be just,—if indeed thou art so fond of honest correction,—come down, come down from the sacred throne of the priesthood, and content thyself with the crown of the kingdom.'

'Then tell me why,' said Hyrcanus, suddenly interrupting him; 'then tell me why.'

'I will tell thee,' answered Eliezer. 'When thy mother was carried captive to the city of Medith, in the days of Antiochus, King of the Greeks,—when the heathens pressed hard on thy father Simon, whom they besieged in the mountain where his wives were captive, he betook himself to flight, and left them there. It is true that he got back again after he had rallied his forces and beaten the enemy, but that notwithstanding, there has always been a whisper that King Hyrcanus is profane. It is therefore not fit that thou shouldest go into the Holy of Holies.'

Now these were hard words to say to an old man who had been high priest forty years. He had not bidden for such cutting faithfulness as this, which was all the

more cruel as the statement was unanswerably true. Mad with rage, Hyrcanus rushed from his seat. The banquet broke up—all was confusion. From that hour there was nothing in Jerusalem but enmity and strife.

The king tried to quiet men's murmurs by a stroke of power—last resource of despots who feel themselves falling. He at once declared the Rabbis guilty of conspiracy, and charged Eliezer with being chief of the conspirators. The charge was not without some shade of reason; for, notwithstanding all their flatteries during the entertainment, that one sentence of truth had reduced the whole of them to silence, and instead of dragging the insolent disturber out of the royal presence, they had let him say what he would, and with tacit unanimity gave consent to every word. Those Rabbis were therefore greatly to blame: after keeping politic silence all their life, and on that very occasion volunteering fulsome flattery, their flattery was as contemptible as their brother's faithfulness was tardy. The aged king, in uncontrollable vengeance, had them all made prisoners at once, and then killed with the sword. Eliezer, their leader as he thought, he caused to be burnt alive.

From that time forward there was bitter hatred between the Asmonean king-priests and the whole body of the clergy. As for Hyrcanus, he died soon afterwards; and when one of his sons, though not the rightful heir, had reigned about twelve months, his eldest son, Alexander Jannai, took the crown. But Alexander had a troublous reign, and in that reign came the first event that we can mark as decisive in relation to our present history.

Jannai began prosperously. He was victorious in war, and the affairs of his priesthood went on smoothly enough; but mischief was brooding in secret. One year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, as he officiated at the altar, one of the disaffected Rabbis approached him rudely, crying as

he came, 'Woe to thee, thou son of a profane woman! What art thou doing? How canst thou dare to meddle with the priesthood? Thy mother[1] was a profane woman, and thou art not fit to be high priest.' So saying, the man flung a citron, which struck him violently in the face. Startled and alarmed at the assault, and perhaps expecting to be attacked murderously by those around, he shouted,[2] 'The sword! the sword upon the Wise Men!' The soldiers rushed into the midst of the Temple, and the blood of six thousand victims flooded the sacred courts.

Not content with this horrible satisfaction, Alexander Jannai, High Priest of the Jews, declared himself a Sadducee, and now the faith of the State was to be changed. Jeroboam was the first who made the Israelites to be idolaters; Alexander Jannai, successor of the noble Maccabees, descendant of a race of martyrs, is the first who invited them to become open infidels, by proclaiming that there is neither angel nor spirit, nor final judgment, nor any resurrection from the dead. As for traditions, he would abolish them; but although the chief teachers of tradition have been slaughtered, and war is waged against their successors in the little kingdom of Judea, the Oral Law will be honoured all the more for the sufferings of its advocates, and the now persecuted sect of Pharisees will flourish more proudly than ever. But a schism never to be healed is at its height.

Rabbi Caleb[3] relates that Alexander Jannai proceeded to greater lengths than Hyrcanus, and put to death no fewer than three thousand persons, in addition to the six thousand that were slaughtered in the Temple. Hatred raged hotter and hotter between him and the Wise Men,

[1] Mother meaning his grandmother, mother of Hyrcanus.

[2] חרב חרב על חכמים.

[3] Trigland quotes from a MS. of this Rabbi, with title of עשרה מאמרות, *The Ten Sentences.*

until he had killed them nearly all. Only about eight hundred evaded his fury for a little, lying in concealment at Bathshemesh. To that place he pursued them, took the city, carried them prisoners to Jerusalem, and there hung them. So vast an execution filled the population of Judea with dismay, and awakened profoundest grief, and an unconquerable sympathy. People gave their terrible king the nickname of Alexander the Piercer, 'piercing with the piercings of a sword.' (Prov. xii. 18.) Desperately abandoning himself to the tempest of revenge, he went beyond all bounds. Only one Rabbi escaped, and that was his wife's brother, Simon ben Shetakh, whom the queen saved by contriving his flight into Egypt. After he had been some time in Alexandria, and there was not known to be a living Rabbi left in the land, the queen his sister succeeded in getting permission for him to return, with a promise that his life should be spared. He did return, and after his return made great boast of the Oral Law, often repeating the words of the Psalmist, 'It is time for thee, O Lord, to work: for they have made void thy law.' (Ps. cxix. 126.) For hatred of the royal Sadducee, he was ten times more a Pharisee than ever.

Meanwhile Alexander began to quail under the consciousness that all men hated him. He was tormented with the dread of some sudden retribution from his enemies, and writhed under the pangs of a guilty conscience. Simon ben Shetakh, on the other hand, grew very famous, and went to greater lengths in exalting his own dignity than any Rabbi before him had ever dared to go. Fearing no contradiction, he taught such things as the Rabbis whom Hyrcanus and Alexander massacred might have confessed faintly, but never ventured to teach. He declared his determination to restore the Law of Moses according to the sense in which, he said, the Fathers had

received it. He it was, if this witness is correct, who first deluded men with the fable that the traditional superstitions were received originally from the lips of Moses on Mount Sinai, and perpetuated by a succession of teachers. It was then, Rabbi Caleb says, that the Jews were divided into two sects, called Rabbanites and Karaites. There is every reason to doubt the introduction of the latter name at that time, but there can be no doubt that the Jews of Palestine were then divided into two parties, very nearly corresponding with Rabbanite and Karaite.

Rabbi Caleb thinks that if the Wise Men themselves, whom the kings massacred, had been alive, they would have refused to suffer the heavy impositions of Ben Shetakh. That is very likely; but a Chief Rabbi who could deal gently with opponents, and bear with contradiction, was not the man wanted for the desperate service of contending single-handed with such a despot as Alexander. They say that, under his fostering influence, the order of Wise Men revived, and took the name of *Pharisees*, or separated persons—a title at such a time far more significant of a political schism than of separation from sinners or retirement from the world; a title which represented, if this account be true, a revolt of the ecclesiastics from the tyranny of kings, at least of kings like the two whose memory is infamous, and who hated the whole community of the Jewish clergy.

Ben Shetakh, however, was a man of strong religious feeling, as well as impetuous temper. When in Alexandria, he fiercely opposed all who rejected the Oral Law, and, after his recall to Jerusalem, maintained the same uncompromising hostility to what his own sect regarded as innovation, although in reality they were themselves the innovators. Later still, when his colleague Rabbi Judah ben Tabbai differed from him on this crucial question of tradition, he altered not, but persisted in his opinions.

He was a high-minded ecclesiastic, sensitive withal, thought it no sin to refuse forgiveness to an adversary, and was ever on the alert to magnify his office. One anecdote remains to illustrate his character, and to show that he had given his royal brother-in-law great offence before the flight to Alexandria. As the story goes, one of the king's servants had committed a murder, and then absconded. The king, as master of the fugitive, was summoned to answer for his servant, and, as master, did honour to the Law by coming. As king, he remembered his dignity, and sat down in court, Ben Shetakh being judge. 'Stand up, King Jannai!' shouted this haughty judge, 'stand up upon thy feet, while they bear witness concerning thee. For thou dost not stand before us, but before Him who spake, and the world was; and remember how it is written, "The two men who have the dispute shall both stand up."' The king, being so challenged, stood up in honour of the high Presence to which the surly judge appealed, but silently ruminated on a rude illustration of the case which Ben Shetakh proceeded to employ, telling his Majesty that 'if an ox kills a man, the owner of the ox must answer for it,' and that he, on the same principle, must answer for his servant, both parties being reduced to the same level in presence of the judge who spake to him,—the king being as the owner of the ox. Here, certainly, was a Rabbanite enlargement of the Law!

I am not uninfluenced by the reluctance of many historians to allow so great antiquity to the Karaites as nearly a century before Christ, nor can I be ignorant of the utter ignorance of chronology prevalent among Jewish writers of even high repute. R. Judah the Levite, author of the Book of Cozri, in the sentence next preceding the one I am about to quote, writes that 'Jesus the Nazarene was a disciple of Joshua ben Perakhya.' That was impossible. But this palpable mistake, whether

wilful or accidental, is not enough to reflect any doubt on the clear statement that 'in the days of Judah ben Tabbai and Simon ben Shetakh *began the sect of Karaism*, התחילה דעת הקראות, on account of something that happened between the Wise Men and King Jannáï,' &c. The affair of Sadok and Baithos, and rise of the sect of Sadducees, is related in the same chapter; but with regard to the Karaites, who here make their earliest appearance in the Book of Cozri, R. Judah is careful to observe that while the Sadducees, or Sadokites, are heretics against whom he prays, 'the Karaites are scrupulously exact, and show themselves very wise in the first principles of conduct throughout life.'[1] To set aside so explicit a testimony from such a witness as this, in deference to an adverse tradition, unsupported by any sufficient reason, would be to throw away wilfully a link in the continuity of this historical sketch which connects Karaism with the narratives of the four Evangelists, and establishes the fact of their existence in principle, if not in name, eight hundred and fifty years earlier than many persons are willing to allow.

[1] *Sepher Cozri*, pars iii. cap. 65.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSES OF HILLEL AND SHAMMAI.

'HILLEL AND SHAMMAI' are as closely associated in Jewish history as the mythological names of Castor and Pollux. They were, like Ben Shetakh and Ben Tabbai, president and vice-president of the Sanhedrim, the presidents being zealous supporters of the so-called Oral Law, and their colleagues not so much opponents in form, as independent men who would accept a tradition if it was fairly to be reconciled with the sense and spirit of the Law of Moses and the teaching of the Prophets. Hence they were not regarded as antagonists, although they generally disagreed, and sometimes their disciples carried the controversy from words to blows.

Hillel the Babylonian, being descended on his father's side from the tribe of Benjamin, and on his mother's from the tribe of Judah, represented in his own person the major part of the Hebrew population of Judea. When forty years of age, he came over to Jerusalem (B.C. 72), and applied himself closely to the study of the Law, enlarged and darkened as it already was by the excessive diligence of masters of tradition. In the eightieth year of his age, and about the hundredth before the destruction of the second Temple, after enthusiastic devotion to study and administration, he was elected president of that high court, not yet deprived of its judicial authority, even in cases of life and death. Notwithstanding his royal

descent, he was a very poor man when he came from Babylonia, sharing with his fellows in the privations of captivity, but rich in a humble and contented spirit. Although not previously of the student-class—a Disciple of the Wise—he had learned enough to thirst for more knowledge, and his proficiency soon brought him into notice. Attired in the garb of a labouring man (for he earned his livelihood by daily labour), he neither wasted time nor lavished words, but revolving the subjects of study in his busy mind, acquired justness of sentiment, a clear judgment, and a refinement of language that attracted the lovers of wisdom, and drew forth the applause of those whose praise was better that gold.[1] He became a member of the Sanhedrim, and had risen above poverty, when Shemaiah and Abtalion, president and vice-president of the Sanhedrim, perished in the slaughter by Herod of all the members of that great assembly, except himself and Shammai. While the Sanhedrim was extinct, and there was no court nor council to receive appeals on any doubtful matter, there arose a practical difficulty for which no decision was on record. The Passover fell on the Sabbath. The observances of the festival and of the Sabbath were incongruous, and therefore one must give way to the other; but *which*? There were three brothers in Jerusalem, 'sons of Bethira,' reputed to excel all others in extent of knowledge, to whom recourse was usually had for guidance where some authoritative decision was needed, and an assembly of citizens besought them to determine what should be done, but the brothers could not agree. Impatient to know how the Holy City should be spared from confusion on the nearly-approaching day, the inquirers turned to Hillel, who instantly settled

[1] There are some amusing tales intended to illustrate his patience and ingenuity when out of work; but they are doubtful, and, even if true, are trifling.

the hard question by pronouncing that the Sabbath must give way to the Passover, for so, he said, he had *received* from his departed masters, the presidents Shemaiah and Abtalion. The opportune decision was most welcome. It was delivered, too, on the strength of *tradition*. To have treasured in memory and heart the oral decisions of wise men of departed generations was deemed equivalent with possessing wisdom and authority also, originally derived from the mountain where Moses was face to face with God. The Passover was kept joyfully. All eyes were turned to the venerable Babylonian, and as soon as the vacated seats of the Great Council could be supplied, Hillel was created president in the year 32 B.C. Like another Moses, he entered on and completed a third period of forty years of life, and at the advanced age of six score, departed full of honour in the year 8 of our era. With his colleague, he presided over the schools of Jerusalem with unexampled success. Their scholars were numbered by thousands, and many of them rose to an eminence that is to this day related with pride in the Hebrew colleges. To Hillel, a prince among traditionists, is attributed the merit of first reducing tradition to a science. His classification of the Mishnah into six orders prepared the basis on which his successors laboured with a zeal that may engage admiration, and with a result that compels both admiration and regret.

Shammai, his colleague, maintained a position of nearly equal eminence. His biography is not so splendid, but he exerted a counteractive influence which tended to save the Hebrew nation from sacrificing, in an excess of man-worship, some distinctive characteristics which the Christian world should be thankful to acknowledge on their behalf. In the above sketch of Hillel we follow familiar guides, but in describing Shammai I thankfully take information from a Karaite who perpetuates a frag-

ment of history which the Rabbanite majority would rather leave to be forgotten in silence.

R. Moses Beshitzi was an enterprising Karaite Jew who set out in the strength of early manhood on a pilgrimage in countries where his brethren of the *Reading* were reputed to be scattered. In that labour he seems to have prematurely exhausted his energies, and having written a book under the title of 'Staff of God,'[1] ended his life. The Karaites, he assures us, unanimously rely upon R. Shammai, and are supported by him and by his 'house of judgment,' accepting from him both instruction in the Law, and an example to be followed. R. Shammai received instruction from R. Shemaiah, as did Shemaiah from R. Judah ben Tabbai, the dissentient colleague of Ben Shetakh, in whose time Israel was divided into two great factions. The line of succession was no doubt interrupted during the intervals that followed when Pompey conquered Palestine and broke up the Sanhedrim, and again when Herod, as we have noted, put its members nearly all to death, and for some years (probably five) prevented its reassemblage; but, allowing for these intervals of suspension, the statement of Beshitzi, and others who have written on the subject, is perfectly intelligible. The Rabbanites, he says, derive their doctrine from Hillel, and his house of judgment. Hillel from Abtalion, and Abtalion from Ben Shetakh, whom he also describes as a man who always took his own way, and both studied and taught independently of his brethren. 'He made a divorce, and separated from the rule of the Wise Men of Israel, acting on his own pleasure, leaning to his own understanding; and, out of his own heart, presuming to affirm "Thus saith the Lord God," when the Lord had not spoken.' This account of the origin of the exaggerated

[1] The title is מטה אלהים; it is quoted freely by Trigland in the seventh chapter of his invaluable *Diatribe*.

form of traditionism adopted by the Rabbanites, but not yet shaped into a system, and appearing only the characteristic of a school, is to my own mind more satisfactory than any of the speculations which are thrown into the way, and obstruct the path of history. Even Ben Shetakh would not have been so enthusiastic and extreme a traditionist if it had not been for horror in the recollection of the fatal banquet of Hyrcanus, and the execrable massacres of Jannai, and a profoundly human sympathy with myriads of Jews persecuted to death or driven to apostasy from the first principle of truth by a savage relative of his own. Jerome[1] reports that the two schools of the Houses of Shammai and Hillel were regarded with little favour by the Jews in general, who called the former 'Scatterer,' and the latter 'Profane,' because they deteriorated and corrupted the Law with their inventions. It is also said that Shammai was leader of the scribes, and Hillel of the Pharisees, which is very like the truth. On account of a fatal conflict between the two houses, which took place on the ninth of Adar, that day was afterwards kept as a fast in memory of the slain. After a struggle of three years for ascendancy, they were persuaded to a reconciliation, but not, as the tale goes, by a voice from heaven, pronouncing the words (אלו ואלו אומרים דברי אלהים חיים) *Both these and these speak the words of the Living God.*[2] Whoever framed the absurd sentence, it passed for law, and their contradictory sayings are perpetuated in the Talmud to this day. Their words are just what St. Paul says his were not, yea and nay; unlike what the Lord said those of his servants ought to be; their yea, yea, or their nay, nay; never contradicting one another.

The first step towards the entire separation of the two

[1] Hieron. *Comment. in Esaiam*, viii. 114.

[2] The authority for this statement is in *Bartolocii Biblioth. Mag. Rabbinica*, s. v. הלל.

'houses' or schools of interpretation of the Law, and the conversion of each school into a sect—unless, indeed, the better of the two be exempted from that ignominious distinction: the first step, I say, towards the great schism was irrevocably taken by those who proposed what the Talmudists afterwards made a standing rule—that '*if the House of Hillel takes one side, and the House of Shammai takes the other, the decision is according to the House of Hillel.*' On this canon of interpretation by majority of votes the Karaites very reasonably observe that as the House of Hillel is now the more numerous of the two, the decision in most places is merely that of a majority. They complain that as the House of Hillel derives its strength from number, and the House of Shammai from skill, the wisdom as well as the justice of the decision must be always questionable, except in those very few places where it happens that the majority of Jewish residents is Karaite. This takes place, as they plead, in open contempt of the sentence of Solomon of glorious memory, that 'better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king.' (Eccles. iv. 13.) They might also say, what doubtless both parties must perceive, that the decisions arrived at by skill, not those voted by majorities, will stand the test of common sense when reconsidered, and that the decisions of the skilful, being placed on record, and proved sound in the experience of the few, will be accepted in future times, provided only that the skilful have based their reasonings on a sure foundation. In *that* case 'the testimony of the Lord standeth sure.'

The Karaites further say that the foreclosing of judgment in obedience to the vote of a multitude that does not reflect, much less judges, must be in most cases extremely inconvenient. On marriage questions, for example, whereon the two houses utterly differ in many cases. 'The House of Shammai says that a man shall

not put away his wife unless he find some uncleanness in her, as it is written in Deut. xxiv. 1. But the House of Hillel says, "Even if she burns his dinner, or if she finds no favour in his eyes." R. Akiba says, "If another is more beautiful than she, as it is written in the same place, 'If she finds no favour in his eyes.'"[1] Here let us not fail to mark this one instance out of many where our Lord condemned the Pharisees precisely on the ground since taken by the Karaites. R. Eliyahu, in his book 'Adéreth,' calls attention to this point of agreement between his brethren and the House of Shammai.

Eleven or twelve years before the decease of Hillel, Jesus of Nazareth was born. The aged saint who took the infant Saviour in his arms was, as we believe, the son of Hillel,[2] the father being then about a hundred and eight years old, and his son perhaps eighty-seven, if, as the Jews appear to say, he was the first-born after Hillel's early marriage. Twelve years later than the presentation in the Temple Hillel died, Simeon succeeded him as prince of the Sanhedrim, and Jesus went into the Temple, on occasion of his first appearance at a feast in Jerusalem, sat with the doctors in *the house of debate* (בית מדרש), and joined in their discussion, both hearing and asking them questions. If nothing that day prevented, R. Simeon himself lectured as usual, just as Shemaiah lectured when Hillel went to hear him before daybreak on a winter's morning, and Jesus sat listening at the feet of Simeon.

[1] *Mishnah*, Ordo Mulierum. De Divortiis, cap. ix. 9.

[2] Athanasius and Epiphanius are quoted for confirmation of this relationship, but on reference I find their testimony is adverse rather than confirmatory. Hillel's father was a man of the tribe of Benjamin, and his mother of the tribe of Judah, whereas the priests were of the tribe of Levi. Now, both those Fathers happen to call Simeon *priest*, or *priest and old man*, whereas he was not a priest, neither does St. Luke say that he was. But, as Greeks, the two Fathers write loosely, and St. Luke is the one sufficient witness.

Having heard, he also asked questions. Gamaliel, son and successor of Simeon, would scarcely be absent, and so the future master of Saul of Tarsus and his future Lord were side by side. The wisdom of Jesus was not lost on either. Doubtless He appealed to God's Law, whatever was the subject of that morning's lecture, whatever doubt or contradiction moved the questioners; and they were all astonished at his understanding and answers. No doubt there was a special reason for his going thither, and when his mother and Joseph remonstrated with 'the child' for quitting their company without making known the reason of his absence, 'He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' (Luke ii. 29.) Now may we not reverently surmise that *that* business could scarcely have been anything less than to give a word in season to the men who ruled the public mind of Jewry at such a juncture in the history of the nation as never was before, nor has been since?

In that very year, whether before or after the Passover I do not pause to investigate, Hillel departed this life, leaving behind him the first ordered sketch of the system of traditions that grew into such a formidable bulk, and assumed so hurtful a character. Just then the sceptre departed from Judah on the banishment of the last king, Archelaus, and Judah was reduced to a Roman province. Just then the sectarian schisms grew more bitter than ever, and still the sects were all political. No longer held in check by the personal unity and united influence of their leaders, who kept peace during their theological controversies, the two schools were breaking out into sanguinary conflict, which lasted for three years, to the loss of many lives. The child Jesus, when about his Father's business, could not be unmindful of the exigencies of that crisis: then was his first personal appeal to the men who,

so to speak, held in their hands the peace of Jerusalem, to be saved by their reconciliation, or to be sacrificed to their obstinacy, and then were sown the sorrows that made Jesus weep, when He exclaimed, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' (Matt. xxiii. 37, 38.) Those traditions that lurked in the incipient Mishnah, those disputes that were to rage in a perpetual schism, might have been all ended if the Doctors had heeded the wisdom of the Child.

But all were not guilty, nor was everything lost. Still there were many good men who waited for the consolation of Israel; and while the wise men and the disputers wrangled, there were faithful matrons who, although not admitted to the *Beth-Midrash*, prayed at home and brought up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Under their smiles and blessings Timothy and Titus were to learn the Scriptures from their early youth. Gamaliel and Nicodemus, even already, caught the spirit of the Holy Child, whose understanding and answers they admired.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

HISTORICALLY considered, the New Testament is a document essentially necessary to the completeness of our survey. We may not yet find Karaites by name, but shall at least be able to trace the principles of Karaism in the Jewish mind, and to mark the deterring influence of our Lord's personal ministrations beyond the circle of Christianity. We shall see how He laid hold of the element of honestly obedient faith which yet remained—how He associated with Himself, for the future benefit of the children of Israel, a multitude who, although stopping short of conversion to Himself, had the mark upon their foreheads of men who sighed and cried for all the abominations that were done in the midst of the city. (Ezek. ix. 4.) He found among such a faithful remnant wherewith to lay the foundation of his future church. The divided house, indeed, could not stand, but even from the fragments of its ruin materials were gathered for building up a more glorious temple to the God of Abraham.

All our Lord's ministry was an active and continuous antagonism to human traditions. The voice from heaven proclaimed Him the beloved Son of God, and commanded the multitudes assembled on the Jordan to hear, that is, to obey Him, not following the 'blind leaders of the blind.' From his first address to the people to his last, He set Himself against the traditions that had been

rapidly gaining strength through not less, probably more than, eighteen years since his conversation with the doctors, and with most pointed and solemn reiteration He enforced his own instructions, which were all in agreement with the Old Testament Scriptures, in plain contradiction to the sayings of *the Ancients*, *οἱ ἀρχαῖοι*, as they were also called by the Pharisees and other Jews; the קדמונין or זקנים הראשונים. By these were not meant the members of the Great Synagogue, but they who followed Simon the Just, the authors of the sentences collected for the Mishnah in their own times, and there honoured with the title of אבות, *Fathers*, of whom Antigonus of Socoh, successor of Simeon, was the first. This opposition never slackened. No one can recall what he remembers of those divine discourses without feeling that the Speaker made it his constant business to denounce a prevailing system of false teaching, and to pour condemnation on a set of men whom He denounces as hypocrites and blind. The denunciations, indeed, are not indiscriminate, and He cautiously refrains from lowering the office they profess to fill. Speaking of them as 'they who sit in Moses' seat,' he bids his hearers keep (*τηρεῖν*) what Moses delivered to be kept, warning them, at the same time, that they must not imitate their practices. To prevent misapprehension, He specifies many of those practices, which are all novelties, vain, trifling, superstitious. He denounces their decisions, which are casuistic and demoralising. A religious rite fairly intended to act out a principle of the Mosaic Law He readily sanctioned. Such was baptism, identical in spirit and meaning with Levitical ablutions, and He even said that it became Himself to submit to it as a *δικαίωμα*, or righteous observance; but such was not the ostentatious washing of hands after touching a Gentile in the market-place, or washing cups and pots from defilement supposed to be contracted from

a Gentile touch. Phylacteries He did not forbid, but He found great fault with the manner then prevalent of making and wearing them. The paying of tithes He did not undervalue, but He did speak very contemptuously of tithing potherbs, and at the same time neglecting the demands of justice, mercy, and truth, and the weightier obligations of the Law. He spared not those who were punctual in ceremonious obedience, and left their parents to starve while they fed the priests. He summoned them to respect the sentence recorded by a Prophet: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, saith the Lord.'

During the more than thirty years that elapsed from the census made by order of Cæsar Augustus to the appearance of the Baptist and his own miracle at Cana, a great change took place in all Palestine—nay, wherever Jews were to be found throughout the empire. Society was well-nigh revolutionised, ancient ties relaxed or broken, and people in general thinking of religion less and less. Hypocrisy and bigotry contended angrily against insolent unbelief. In all this the spirit of those godly persons who lived just long enough to hear of the angel-song at Bethlehem, and to witness the adoration of the infant Jesus by the Magi, had passed away, and the good men of the living generation were less eminent, and in number fewer, than the compeers of Zacharias, Simeon, and Anna. The ministry of the Lord Jesus opened a new era in the religious history of this nation; and we will now inquire whether there were any manifestations of disaffection towards the traditionists in authority, or any influential advocates of the simple teaching of the ancient Scriptures, or any traces of public sentiment, that would give hope of a favourable response to the appeals of the Saviour.

This is all we could expect to find in the New Testament, for professed Karaites were not yet. Learned men

have laboured to make it appear that scribes and lawyers were the same as those whom Jewish writers call 'Masters of the Reading,' as distinguished from Masters of the Mishnah and Masters of the Talmud; but every step taken in examination of those verbal speculations removes us farther and farther from hope of confirmation. Passages from Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Origen have been adduced to show that scribe and doctor of the Law are equivalent terms, and then it is taken for granted that a doctor of the Law must have been a faithful expositor of the Law of Moses. But the conjectures are ventured without a due regard to the laws of evidence. Time, place, language, religion, are all different, sometimes remotely distant and various; except, perhaps, in the single case of Epiphanius, who, as Bishop of Cyprus and historian of heresies, made it his duty to obtain as much information as possible from Palestinian Jews, and says, on their testimony, that *scribe*, γραμματεύς, and *doctor of the Law*, νομοδιδάσκαλος, mean the same person. So they may, and so they sometimes do; but the indifferent use of two titles for one person, as *presbyter* and *bishop*, for example, is a confusion of language in free and familiar use that cannot avail much for the solution of a doubt in history; and having pondered again and again the passages referred to by Trigland and others, and examining the New Testament for myself, I so frequently find the use of the same word, γραμματεὺς or νομικός, for very different persons, that I fail to derive any conclusive information on the point from the narratives themselves, except it be that the lawyers are as often and severely censured as the scribes, and that both lawyers and scribes are found among the Pharisees. But being in search of evidence, time shall not be wasted in quoting passages merely to show that they shed no light on the present inquiry. A gleam of light, however, may be caught from the word

νομοδιδάσκαλος, literally meaning a *teacher of the Law*, and so translated in the simple Syriac version, which was made in Palestine itself, and made early enough for the translator to know the customary meaning of the words in common use a generation or two before his own time. Now it is fairly argued in favour of understanding this word as indicating loyalty to the supreme authority of the written Law of God, that it is peculiar to the New Testament, being used there after the rise of Jewish traditions, and that it is translated literally in the Syriac version, the same translation not being given to the more familiar word *νομικός*, *lawyer*. It is not, I repeat, found in the Septuagint, nor, if I am sufficiently informed, in the other Greek versions of the Old Testament. It occurs in Luke v. 17, together with 'Pharisee;' and the Pharisees and doctors of the Law who then came together with their questions were unusually candid, and easily convinced. It is also said that Gamaliel was a *νομοδιδάσκαλος*, and of his honesty there can be no doubt. But then Gamaliel, we know from the testimony of his most illustrious pupil, was a rigid Pharisee; he taught accordingly, and therefore was probably[1] a traditionist. There is only one

[1] I am careful to say no more than *probably*, because a man might be of that strictest sect of the Jews' religion, and yet utterly opposed to Kabbala. Saul of Tarsus was, 'as touching the Law,' not the traditions, 'a Pharisee' (Phil. iii. 8). Even after his conversion, St. Paul did not hesitate to 'cry out in the council, Men and brethren, *I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*' (Acts xxiii. 6). Even when the Talmud was acknowledged by all except Karaites, literal interpretation was not absolutely rejected, and the most eminent Rabbinical commentators have excelled in exact literal and historical interpretation of the sacred text. The Karaites uniformly contended for דרך הפשט, *the simple method*, but the following words occur in a note of Aben Ezra, on Lamentations i.: '—— and the simple method (ד"פ).' This is the substance, in words most carefully chosen; and thus they spoke according to the plain sense, and the translated or copied words (והדברים עתיקים). The same commentator contrasts, in a passage elsewhere occurring, but which I cannot turn to at this moment, the דרך המדרש, *method of Midrash*, which was that of the highest

more place where this word is found (1 Tim. i. 7), but there men boast of a high title who are censured for falling far beneath it; and besides this, we find the later Jews for ages boasting of the *Law* when at last they mean the Talmud, which they regard as containing the most full and correct exposition of the Law of Moses. We must therefore confess ourselves unable to trace a title equivalent with Karaite in the New Testament.

There are, however, two or three facts which do reveal distinctly the presence of the Scriptural principle amidst the overflowing torrent of traditionism which rose very high, and seemed to carry all before it, during twenty or thirty years after Hillel had finished his arrangement of the traditions under the six orders of the Mishnah; and one of these instances is worth more than a thousand of mere similarity of name.

St. Paul writes to Timothy (A.D. 58, according to Conybeare and Howson, 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15), and in that Epistle reminds him that from a child he has known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 'All scripture,' he proceeds to say, 'is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect, throughly furnished* unto all good works.' This is an explicit declaration of the sufficiency of the written Word of God, without any traditionary

Kabbalists, with this *simple method*, and uses, as an accustomed title, המעתיקים, the *transcribers, copiers, quoters*, persons who were content with a plain allegation of the sacred text (Aben Ezra, on Deut. xxv. 5). Even the traditionists did the same when it suited them; so did the great Maimonides, a bitter enemy of the Karaites; so did all the chief commentators of the twelfth and following centuries, and הדקדוקים, *the grammarians*, found free field for their labour among all the sects. The truth is that there always was, and still is, too much diversity among the Jews for any man's method to be conjectured confidently from the mere name of the sect he follows.

complement for the use of a teacher of the people. This is said to Timothy twenty-five years after Christ, Timothy being then ordained Bishop of Ephesus, and the Apostle also *calls to mind* the time when Timothy was a child, and reminds him from whom he learned the Scriptures. He was taught by his mother, who had in herself unfeigned faith, and was for this indebted to his grandmother Lois. His grandmother, evidently, taught his mother in *her* childhood, who afterwards taught Timothy in *his*, all which would require more than twenty-eight years to be accomplished, counting from the time when Lois was herself instructed; and therefore Lois must have been a student of the Old Testament Scriptures, without the taint of tradition, before she could have been induced to cast off tradition by any influence from Christian teaching.

St. Paul was in Thessalonica and Berea in the year 52. (Acts xvii.) At Thessalonica the unbelieving Jews raised a tumult, which drove him from the city, and thence he proceeded to Berea, where he went into a synagogue and taught. His teaching in that synagogue was derived from the Bible, to which he referred the congregation for confirmation of his doctrine. 'These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.' Here, then, were two synagogues, in one of which the Jews were furiously hostile, but in the other *more noble*, and their nobility arose from an established reverence for the Word of God. Traditionist casuistry would prevent any such readiness of mind as they displayed, and, if nothing more, would produce hesitation, scrupulosity, and strife among themselves. But nothing of the kind took place. Such a temper in persons totally strangers to Christian preaching, and living in a country where Christianity had now to be published for the first

time, shows that they must have been comparatively free, to say the least, from the influence of tradition regarded as a necessary supplement to the Word of God, or they would have maintained, with their less noble brethren in Thessalonica, that the Scripture cannot be understood without illustration from proficients in an oral law.

Perhaps there were other Jews like them among the multitude to whom the Lord Jesus said, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them, *as ye think*, ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.'

As we advance, we have occasion to observe the state of feeling among the Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt on the matter of Bible-reading, and therefore we notice here that there were in the Berean synagogue many honourable women which were Greeks, who believed the Christian preacher after searching the Scriptures to see whether what he said was true. Perhaps, again, the Greeks who came to Jerusalem and desired to see Jesus were Bible-reading Jews. But we have now seen enough to be assured that in the time of Christ the Jews were not all followers of the traditions of the elders.

Before leaving the New Testament, there is yet another note to be taken.

The more anyone has studied the entire contents of the sacred volume, so much the more distinctly he perceives the agreement of the language of each of the inspired writers with that of his age and country. This is not mere *adaptation*. It was not necessary that they should adapt their style by changing it. It was just that of those around. To us at a distance, who compare it with other portions of the same volume, the difference strikes us as remarkable; but they could not themselves perceive local peculiarities of idiom as we perceive them now. They not only used familiar words and phrases at the time current, but in discoursing on familiar subjects they repeated, consciously or unconsciously, allusions that were

then in every person's mouth. There was a fashion in the market-place, and there was a fashion in the synagogue. One might speak about Jannes and Jambres without caring to think of the authenticity of the tale, any more than an accomplished scholar of this day would be above speaking of 'Gog and Magog,' if wishing to note the place where those grotesque objects are to be found. A Jew of the Apostolic age would not hesitate to pronounce a technical word to express a date, any more than at this day, one of his descendants would hesitate to direct you to page *Kav* (קו) if he wished you to find the 106th page in a Hebrew book, and you would not think of troubling him with a disquisition on the possible meaning of the sound.

In like manner, the later books of the New Testament bear obvious traces of an advanced Rabbinism in the common speech of Jews. The Second Epistle of St. Peter, the Epistle of Jude, and the Apocalypse are strongly marked with this peculiarity; and it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that this indicates a corresponding change in the language of those who spoke and wrote on religious subjects. It might have been avoided. The Holy Spirit might have always kept his servants aloof from the shifting varieties of human language, but that He never did. As the antiquarian architect can confidently assign a proximate date to any building sufficiently preserved for even slight examination, so can the literary critic estimate the period when the manuscript copy or the original work was written. And so the notes of time wrought into the last few leaves of Christian Scripture afford us at this moment some instruction. Within thirty years after St. Paul, Rabbinical studies revived in Palestine, through the zeal of earnest men who escaped from Jerusalem in the earlier part of the Roman siege, and established themselves in the towns which soon became famous as chief seats of Hebrew learning.

CHAPTER VI.

TIBERIAS AND PALESTINE.

LONG before the last lines of the New Testament were written, Jerusalem was rased to the ground. Amidst all the calamities that overwhelmed the Jews, the force of party-spirit was not broken, and Rabbinic zeal grew more intense, even as the flood gains depth and rapidity in proportion as the channel narrows. The relative position of parties was also changed, the parties themselves being different and more numerous. If the question was barely one of literal interpretation, the houses of Hillel and Shammai were ready for battle at any moment; while the multitude, neutral for the time, as Jerome heard his Hebrew friends describe the matter, stood aloof, content to call one party *destructive*, and the other *profane*. If Jewry was moved on a question of doctrine, the subject of dispute would determine the distribution of the belligerent force, which might be Pharisees on one side, and Sadducees on the other—those who contended for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and these more coldly infidel than Sadoc himself, ready to assail them with derision. But now there is another party, the Christian, and this is very strong.

The Divine Founder, far more emphatically than any of his servants, condemned the traditions of the elders as being the great occasion of disobedience and infidelity—a system of delusion, offensive to God and injurious to

mankind. His servants were not empowered to employ language of equal authority, and therefore they could not so denounce the evil; neither might their energies be largely spent in assailing the strongholds of tradition, while their one all-absorbing care was to discharge the peculiar duties of their vocation by publishing the Gospel, surrounded as they were with witnesses of its power unto the salvation of every believer. They ceased not to preach Jesus and the Resurrection, and so kept the public mind alive to the recollection of the day of Crucifixion, when the sun was darkened, and the vail of the Temple rent,—the morning of the Resurrection, when the graves were opened, with their account of the glorious Ascension, and of the Pentecostal awakening and conversion of the thousands. This doing, the Christian preachers raised another conflict, and wherever their voice was heard, the Jews were divided on the claims of Jesus of Nazareth. Seldom were they all united against the Evangelists, for it was almost certain that a few at least, whether Hebrews or Hellenists, men or women, would receive the truth. Sometimes a multitude, many even of the priests, would profess themselves obedient to the faith. The more thoughtful would go to the fountain of knowledge, and search the Scriptures of their own accord; therein to seek either denial or confirmation of the discourses they had heard. While so engaged, some sense of the incomparable majesty of God's Word would surely rest upon them. In such sacred moments they heeded not the clamour of the sects, but gazed with undistracted steadfastness into the sanctuary of heavenly wisdom.

Large secessions from Judaism proved that on that side the contest had been unequal. The traditionists were opposed by a power they had neither force nor weapons to resist. They had not yet agreed upon a

book that they might quote against the Christian preachers, for the Mishnah was but rudely drafted, and even the text of the first draft was not settled, much less expounded in the synagogues. The traditions themselves came not from any fountain universally acknowledged. Each sentence could only be traced to a human speaker, and it is observable that when our Lord enumerated certain traditional customs of the Pharisees, He treated them with significant indifference as mere voluntary rites: 'Many other such like things ye do.'

On the contrary, the Christians made vigorous and constant use of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, which all parties acknowledged to be written by inspiration, confirmed by indubitable evidence, and the latest of them accepted by ancients who lived in the world generations before the Mishnaic sentences were uttered. The same hand that opened the sacred roll, to be read in the congregation, was often laid upon the sick with power to heal, or touched the dead, to raise him up in the name of Jesus, while Jewish exorcists, essaying to do the like, were confounded. So it was when the man with the unclean spirit fell on them, exclaiming, 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?'

It was not now Hillel or Shammai, Antigonus or Ṣadoc disputing for possession. From that Feast of Pentecost, when thousands of Jews were incorporated into the Church, the precincts of the synagogue were every day narrowed. Myriads of God's ancient people experienced new convictions, and although the leading traditionists worked harder than ever to frame a complete code of rules for the government of their congregations, there was a widespread outgrowth of dissatisfaction with the whole scheme of oral law. The project of repeating, or amplifying, or substituting a modern contrivance for the ceremonial law of Moses, which could

neither be observed in Jerusalem nor transplanted to any other place, was regarded with mistrust by many, while others laboured for its accomplishment with all the more desperate enthusiasm.

If Christians, in those days of miracle and awakening, had not Judaized at all; if the orthodox had not retaliated evil for evil on the Jews; if Gentile proselytes to the Christian name had not brought in with them idolatries which the Jews abhorred; if all prominent advocates of Christianity had been adequately charitable and well informed, refraining from vituperation and watching against untruth in controversy with the Jewish brethren, Christendom would not have degenerated as it did, both parties would have had God's pure Word in supreme honour, and the world might never have seen a Talmud or a Koran.

But matters took a very different course, and we have now to glance at the Hebrew schools in Palestine, from the Apostolic age to their dispersion and decay.

Jerusalem was made a desolate heap, and the youth of Israel were left destitute of schools, if not of teachers. Still the exiles were permitted to revisit the Holy Land, although not the Holy City; the silence of despair was quickly broken, and the Israelite, whose indomitable spirit refuses to bow under any discouragement, rose up again, more vigorous than ever. The old men, schooled in sorrows, rallied around themselves the manhood that remained, and the infancy that multiplied, resolving that they would transmit a knowledge of their religion to future generations. They knew that they possessed, word for word, the covenant that God made with their ancestors, containing promise of a King that should sit upon the throne of David,—a King whose majesty would outshine the glories of Solomon, and whose goodness would equal or surpass the graces of their lord Moses.

They were not sensible of their error in obscuring that great Covenant with late inventions; but, imagining those inventions to be beneficial, resolved that they would teach them diligently to their children, and for that purpose multiplied schools in proportion to the increase of their families. To every synagogue it was their intention to attach a school.

Rabbi Judah had determined that any town should be considered worthy to have a synagogue as soon as it had a hundred and twenty male Jewish inhabitants of full age.[1] The commentators on this decision, Rabbis Bartenora and Maimonides, explain that so many were necessary for transacting the ordinary business of a synagogue, both civil and sacred; and, after specifying the duties that were to be distributed among the hundred and twenty, they close the list by saying, '*and one schoolmaster.*' This was as necessary as 'one surgeon to cure,' and 'one scribe' to make the public records.

In four towns in Palestine, namely, JABNEH, ZEPHORIAH, CÆSAREA, and TIBERIAS, where favouring circumstances had raised the schools into higher efficiency, the elder youth of other towns were assembled to pursue their studies, and the schools took the character of colleges.

At *Jabneh*, the first rector was Rabban John, the son of Zakhai. He escaped from Jerusalem when Titus Vespasian entered, and gathered into the place a new and larger population, who took him for their father. So he was at once governor of the town, judge of the synagogue, and head master of the school. On him it devolved to organise the new township, and to this end he had to study the principles of government, and guard the laws which it behoved the inhabitants to obey. Those laws,

[1] *Sanhedrin*, i. 1.

as yet, were only to be sought in the Books of Moses, with such traditions as he knew for help to understand the laws. As for civil precautions, he very laudably did his best; as to sacred observances, his position was extremely difficult, and his error, as a traditionist, was not peculiar to himself alone. Like others dependent on private resources, *he set hedges* (תקן סיגות) round Moses' Law, to keep it safe. He tried to fence a dismantled fortress with bulwarks made out of the ruins. He had, however, abundant material of the kind, for his master was Gamaliel the Younger, son of Gamaliel the Aged, the reverend master at whose feet St. Paul had profited above all his equals in that factitious learning which, after all, he counted as dross, and rejected as 'rudiments of the world,'—elements of a system decayed, corrupt, abandoned.

ZEPHORIAH and CÆSAREA also attained a temporary honour as possessing colleges, but their history is of lesser importance.

TIBERIAS became eventually the one centre in the Holy Land of that learning which Rabban John cultivated so diligently at Jabneh. Tiberias was supposed to be the ancient Rakkath (Josh. xix. 35), but that is doubted. There is no doubt, however, as to its identity with the present *Tabariah*. The city, as yet but recent, was eminent, and beautiful indeed for situation. To us the name is familiar as being borrowed for the Lake of Galilee, called also the Sea of Tiberias, and mentioned under both descriptions in the Gospels. The Roman emperor Tiberius chose the site for a new city, in admiration of the scenery around, and, as customary with emperors, gave it his own name with the slight syllabic variation. Sacred, indeed, are the memories of the lake, and they could not have been quite unknown to the Jewish fugitives who then found refuge on its borders, but they did not acknowledge the divinity of Him who

had walked upon those waters, who stilled the tempest that rushed down from the gorges of those mountains, and made the lake and its shores the scene of many other mighty miracles. It is for travellers to describe the beauties of Tiberias, seated as it is in one of the most delicious valleys of the world. A note of description from one of them will not be out of place.[1]

'The ruins of the ancient city, the numerous tombs in the vicinity, one of which contains the remains of the great Maimonides, and the Jewish population, whose peculiar manners and features at once attract the traveller's attention as he passes through the streets of the modern town, attest the reverence in which it has been held by the distant settlements, whence Jews have for centuries come to lay their bones in the neighbourhood.'

In short, for three centuries Tiberias was in the stead of Jerusalem to the Jews of Western Asia.

The first rector of the college was R. Simon, son of Gamaliel II., and the successor of Simon was R. Judah the Holy, called Rabbi only, by way of distinction, when his sentences are quoted. His countrymen were agreed in the persuasion that in his day there was not a man in the world fit to be compared with him; and wild as are some of the legends of Rabbi Judah the Holy, they contain a reality of sober truth which tells that he was distinguished by excellent wisdom and extraordinary sanctity. 'There he sat, surrounded with seventy judges, in Beth-Shearim, in Tiberias, and in Zephoriah. Tiberias lay deepest.'[2] It lay embosomed in a broad valley, west of the lake, cut through by perpetual streams that water ever-flourishing forests, as they flow down from the everlasting hills above and around, rushing to the Sea of Galilee. 'Tiberias lay deepest of all the cities,' most sheltered, therefore, and most peacefully retired, 'and

[1] *Sinai and Palestine.* By Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, M.A., chap. x.
[2] Buxtorf's *Tiberias*, chap. iv.

there the Sanhedrim was captive in the tenth captivity;' for so many times had they met hurriedly in places where troubles would not suffer them to rest; and residence in any place other than Jerusalem, however pleasant, hospitable, or even secure, is always called a captivity by the loyal Hebrew.

This illustrious Rabbi and his successors not only enjoyed the obedient recognition of the Jews in matters relating to religion, but were allowed by the Romans to exercise a certain civil jurisdiction, within the Imperial boundaries, over the Jews of the dispersion. They say that the Emperor Antoninus[1] conferred many honours on him, treating him with much favour, and, when at Tiberias, admitting him to familiar conversation. The Jews then enjoyed special privileges in the city, and when Antoninus died, Rabbi Judah lamented that a bond of strength was broken.

By permission of Antoninus, it is affirmed, he published his great work, the Mishnah, which by that Imperial sanction had the force of what we should call canon law, for general observance by the Jews. It was so called to signify that it should serve as a *second* Law, be adapted to the circumstances of a scattered people, and facilitate the application of the first to all the business of life. As to the alleged sanction, it is quite probable that so prudent a Chief Rabbi would enjoy the favourable regard of all Roman authorities, but the particular statement now quoted lacks the confirmation requisite for its acceptance as an historic truth. Whatever Antoninus might have permitted, experience taught his Christian successors the inexpediency of extending to human laws the recognition which is due to the laws of God, and, so instructed, Justinian prohibited the Mishnah from being read in synagogues.

[1] Whether Antoninus Pius or Philosophus, is uncertain; perhaps both.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MISHNAH.

IF the Saviour had not come into the world; if the legal types and historic shadows of four or five thousand years had not been superseded by the substantial benefits of a higher dispensation, and if the one great prediction of the Prophets had not been fulfilled, any judicious effort to facilitate the due application of a law not yet repealed would have deserved the highest commendation. R. Judah, however, was not the author of this secondary code, for its materials, orally recited like Arabian legends, had been in vogue long before, being those very traditions which the Messiah condemned, and which the learned Rabbi, not considering or not pondering the reason of that condemnation, spent the best years of his life in correcting and arranging. He probably revised the gradually collected text, and, in some inferior way, did for the Mishnah what Ezra had done for the Old Testament Scriptures. To speak in Hebrew style, *he sealed the book.*

The titles of the six ORDERS of the Mishnah, with those of the *Tractates* of each Order, are given at the end of this chapter,[1] and, thus exhibited, may convey the first idea of the framework of the Talmud—that immense collection which has been made equally the subject of mysterious admiration and of idle ridicule. The Mishnah, as the original text of the Talmud, and as a faithful picture of Jewish theology and ecclesiology in the apostolic

[1] See Note A, at the end of this chapter.

and post-apostolic ages, should be known to every Christian student,—at least in its general outlines,—and a nearer acquaintance with its contents is indispensably required for successful investigation of the Hebrew element in primitive Christianity, as found in the New Testament, and in the New Testament alone. As an ancient document, it possesses great interest, and we should be thankful to God for the preservation of so large a mass of materials for explaining the phraseology, and therefore the teaching, of our Lord and his Apostles—materials which are not now sufficiently employed in application to their proper use. One thought only dashes our satisfaction, and it is that all the evidences of Christianity were ignored by the laborious compiler during its production. On the very scene of our Saviour's mighty works, and within sound of the traditions of his presence, the chief of the wise men of Israel spent years of toil, and produced with his own hand a literary key to his discourses.

'Let my part be with them that go to the synagogue on the Sabbath in Tiberias,' says one of the Rabbis in the Talmud, 'and with them that go out of the synagogue on the Sabbath in Zephoriah.'[1] Zephoriah was built upon a hill, and the sun disappeared there half an hour later than at Tiberias, which lay low on the eastern side of a high mountain which hid it so much sooner. The devout Rabbi, could his wish be realised, would have added half an hour to the Sabbath time. But the traditional name of the mountain behind Tiberias is 'Mountain of the Beatitudes,' for there, it is believed, our Lord delivered the sermon to the great multitude, as related by St. Matthew. Under the shadow, then, of the very mountain where that sermon was delivered, was prepared the collection of traditions which were alluded to by the Divine

[1] Quoted by Buxtorf, *ut supra.*

Preacher, and it must be acknowledged that without the Mishnah it would be vain to attempt a full *textual* exposition of the sermon. Such a key Rabbi Judah unconsciously prepared. We regret his unbelief, yet must honestly acknowledge that, in this unbelief, there was no apparent malignity. Although shielded by the protection of the Pagan, and perhaps incited by the zeal of inferior brethren, he did not, as I think, set down a word in disparagement of the person or ministration of our Lord Jesus. With self-imposed reserve, he laboured in the forlorn work of reciting rules for the due observance of festivals that had not been celebrated for three or four generations past, and never could be kept again;—for marking the boundaries of a land that never could be occupied by his people, at least so long as they remained in unbelief,—for defining the domestic relations of tribes that were utterly scattered and denationalised,—for preparing oblations that could not be presented, and for sacrifices that could not be slain, because the altars were overthrown and the priesthood was extinct.

Yet again. The Mishnah must be read with interest, for it has contributed, more than any other visible instrument, to the perpetuation of a system of traditionary principles, precepts, and customs that keeps alive the peculiar spirit of Judaism, as distinct from all the world of Gentiles, that feeds an enthusiasm and rivets an attachment strong beyond the conception of any stranger, thus keeping this ancient people in an isolated existence for the fulfilment of their appointed service in the world, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall be gathered in, and the dispersed of Judah shall return with a ransomed world to crown the triumph of their Messiah—theirs and ours. While it serves these great purposes, Christian scholars do well to acknowledge its existence, examine its various contents, and refrain from indulging in expressions of

contempt or censure until their criticism can be discriminative as to the demerits and merits of the work.

Two events quickly followed after its completion. One was the publication of what is called the Jerusalem Talmud, which is little more than four of the six Orders of the Mishnah, with notes.[1] Led away by the starving spirit which ever wanders in search of something better than has been yet found by the beings it possesses, other members of the Sanhedrim and college of Tiberias had no doubt been working busily to produce a commentary on the sentences of the Wise Men from Antigonus of Socho onward, as they were now arranged by R. Judah the Holy. They say that in closing the collection he was guided by the alleged decision of an oracle, which pronounced the contrary sayings of the houses of Hillel and Shammai to be both of them the words of God. By virtue of that absurd figment, the two great parties which sat face to face in the colleges and synagogues of Israel were clothed in the same livery of sect, as one might almost say, that they might be authorised to keep up the habit of contradiction and spread casuistry instead of promulgating truth. This was Talmudism properly so called.

The fathers of Tiberias were the first of Jews to undertake that work. They wrote the first *Talmud*, published at Tiberias in the year 230, and called the Jerusalem Talmud, as distinguished from the Babylonian: not that it was written in Jerusalem, which would not be possible, but because Jerusalem was claimed by the authors as their metropolis.

The other event was the migration eastward of several of the most learned Jews from the college of Tiberias. In consequence of their departure from Tiberias, and settlement in Babylonia among the descendants of those who remained there after the first captivity, there

[1] See Note B, at the end of this chapter.

arose a new and far more powerful centre of Rabbinical influence in the East; but Palestine was not yet deserted, nor was the chair of R. Judah at once left vacant. Two eminent Rabbis, Ammi and Asshi, did not indeed occupy that chair, but they are mentioned as flourishing together in the country about the year 300. Then in the year 340 came into view R. Hillel the Prince, Chief Rabbi and Head of the Jews in that captivity, known to posterity as an astronomer, and marked as the author, or, at least, the last reviser of the Jewish chronology. With him, however, promotions to the rank of Doctor ceased in the school of Tiberias.

Now appear evidences of a very powerful influence of Christianity in Palestine, and a corresponding decay of Judaism at Tiberias. Epiphanius, a native of Palestine and Bishop of Constantia, in Cyprus, is quoted as having heard that the Jews of that city possessed the Gospel according to St. John in Hebrew,—or Syriac, the vernacular of Syria, called Hebrew by the Christian Fathers,—and that they classed it with their own apocryphal books. The informant of Epiphanius was a Jew converted to Christianity, persecuted by the Jews, but protected by the emperor, who permitted him to build a Christian church. The Dialogue of Justin Martyr with Trypho the Jew is a notable indication of the intelligent controversy of that age, that could not be conducted in so charitable a spirit, and with such fixed purpose, without producing considerable effect. Epiphanius further informs us that there were many converts made from Judaism about the time at which we have arrived, and most remarkable of all is his account that Hillel himself, prince, philosopher, and astronomer, was in heart a Christian, and that, when on his death-bed, he sent for the Christian bishop, and was privately baptised, 'and so the worthy patriarch departed this world from the sacred

baptism, and after partaking of the holy mysteries.'[1] The bishop, it seems, was a physician, or acted as such, as did Rabbis and priests commonly, and after desiring Hillel's chamber to be cleared of visitors, he remained with him alone, and baptised him secretly. A secret baptism is rather a thing to be ashamed of than published abroad, but if the Prince of the Jews in Palestine quitted the synagogue on his death-bed, that was a fact which, to say the least, indicates a decline of zeal in the very head of the captivity. A conversion to the *faith* of Christ would have been openly confessed; and a more satisfactory instance of friendly communication with Christians is the notorious fact that Jerome, without any concealment or disguise, obtained the assistance of a learned Jew from Tiberias to assist him in translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin. This learned Hebrew could not have rendered such a service to a Christian theologian unless he had been sustained by the favouring opinion of his own people; such as, to borrow a later example by way of illustration, was afforded to R. Moses Harrágel, a learned Jew of Maqueda, in Spain, when he went to Toledo, early in the fifteenth century, and sat down daily with a high dignitary of the Roman Church, to translate the Hebrew Bible into 'good Castilian.'[2] It would be easy to demonstrate the happy influence which rested on the Hebrew population of Spain at that particular time, and gave a powerful impulse to the early acceptance of the Gospel by multitudes of the Spanish people, especially those of Hebrew birth, and, if

[1] Epiphanii *adv. Hæres.* lib. i. tom. ii. Hæres. 30. Adversus Ebionæos.

[2] This commendation of the version of Ben Rágel for *good Castilian* must pass on its own merits. I fear there is no good vernacular in any of the old Jewish versions. They are so extremely close to the letter, *esclavas á la letra*, as the Spaniard would say, that there can hardly be a sentence of good Castilian possible, and sense itself is often lost in superstitious scrupulosity without intelligence.

I mistake not, of Karaite principles, if not Karaites professed. A similar influence was now prevalent in Palestine.

The Babylonian Jews were, in the days of Hillel the Prince, rather the successful rivals than the cordial friends of their brethren in Tiberias,—certainly more zealous traditionists; and although people say, with or without proof, that a love of Hebrew learning lingered in Tiberias for many ages, the three Buxtorfs, who made this passage of Jewish history a special study, and whom I now chiefly follow, could not discover any traces of scholarship in the place on record, after the remarkable death-bed baptism of Hillel the Second.[1]

The desertion of the Palestinian schools in the fourth century can be easily accounted for. During the latter years of Hillel's life, Christianity—already much debased, we know—rapidly gained political influence as the religion of the empire, but lost religious influence in converse proportion. The most cursory perusal of the Imperial laws concerning Samaritans and Jews suggests what a careful examination of the history of those laws confirms, disclosing to view a legal oppression that crushed the Jews to the dust, and a disgusting system of bribery and intimidation which induced myriads to desert the synagogue, and lured or forced them into what was miscalled 'the Church,' yet made them not Christians, but confirmed hypocrites.

Every honest Christian is bound to make this acknowledgment, but it concedes nothing to weaken the persuasion that earlier intercourse with Christians led the Jews of Palestine to study the Old Testament Scriptures more practically in order to meet the Christian advocates, examining the facts of sacred history, and searching out the literal meaning of the prophecies. But let it be remembered that the persecutions of Constantine the Great,

[1] *Tiberias, sive Commentarius Masorethicus*, cap. v.

the first Christian who made a law against the Jews, did not begin until Hillel had nearly finished his career, and the school of Tiberias had already fallen into a state of irremediable decay.

The three centuries of Hebrew study in Palestine were not lost, and the character of Mishnaical literature, as compared with the later Talmudic literature of Babylonia, is very strongly marked. The Mishnah was originally devised to be 'the hedge of the Law;' and although the tendency of the work, as already marked, was to supersede the Law, the pre-eminence of the Law itself was always acknowledged, if not always felt. At first, while R. Judah the Holy was prosecuting his labour in collecting the traditions, and Juvenal was writing his Satires (for the two were contemporary), Moses was reputed the supreme authority of Judaism. The Roman poet discovered in Judaism no other objects on which to spend his ridicule than *the Sabbaths, the God of Heaven, the clouds* of Mount Sinai and the sanctuary, *abstinence from unclean meats, circumcision, separation from the Gentiles, and the hidden volume of Mosès.* The words of the satirist, so often quoted (we have given the sense), should be repeated now, for the satisfaction of the reader that the absurdities of tradition had not attracted his attention.

Quidam, sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem,
Nil præter nubes, et cæli numen adorant;
Nec distare putant humana carne suillam,
Qua pater abstinuit; mox et præputia ponunt:
Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges,
Judaicum ediscunt, et servant, ac metuunt jus,
Tradidit arcano quodcumque volumine Moses.
Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti;
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.
Sed pater in causa, cui septima quæque fuit lux
Ignava et partem vitæ non attigit ullam.[1]

[1] Juvenalis *Satira* xiv. 96–106.

Tacitus is far more unjust than Juvenal, but his feeble travesty of the Mosaic history, and misrepresentation of the Jewish religion, is equally free from allusion to the absurdities of Talmudical tradition.

Secessions from the dominant party, or from the prevailing faith, had often hitherto been political and factious, but in the year of our Lord 360, the signal was given for a secession for conscience' sake. At that time Hillel II. made a revision of the Jewish method of determining the length of the year, and appointing the Feast of the Passover. In his calculation and its result he followed the Christians, who had learned this more correct system from the Greeks. Hillel, being president of the Sanhedrim, engaged that venerable council to join him in giving the adoption of the new system the highest sanction that could be found in all Jewry, and the majority of synagogues received their decision without the slightest difficulty.

But there was a multitude of Jews so accordant in principle as to need no organisation for united resistance. They did not acknowledge the right of the Sanhedrim to supersede the explicit directions given in the Law for new moons and festivals. They would not depart from the letter of that Law. They were numerous enough to keep the feasts, and observe the 'beginning of the year,' and 'the beginning of the month too,' without regarding the novel proceedings of another multitude, which in some neighbourhoods there would be. They acted accordingly, and so they continue to act at this day.

In the year 360, then, the Paschal controversy of Judaism and the first movement towards a Karaite secession simultaneously took place, although Karaism, in substance, was too ancient to date later than Ezra.

NOTE A, page 57.

THE ORDERS AND TRACTATES OF THE MISHNA.

I. זְרָעִים. SEEDS.

1. בְּרָכוֹת. *Benedictions.* Prayers and thanksgivings. Ch. ix. sec. 57.
2. פֵּאָה. *Corner* of the field left for the poor. Ch. viii. sec. 69.
3. דְּמַאי. *Things doubtful.* Whether to be tithed or not. Ch. vii. sec. 63.
4. כִּלְאַיִם. *Divers kinds.* Not to be mixed. Ch. ix. sec. 77.
5. שְׁבִיעִית. *The seventh* year, when the land should rest. Ch. x. sec. 88.
6. תְּרוּמוֹת. *Offerings* to priests. Ch. xi. sec. 100.
7. מַעֲשְׂרוֹת. *Tithes* to Levites. Ch. v. sec. 40.
8. מַעֲשֵׂר שֵׁנִי. *The second tithe* from Levites to priests. Ch. v. sec. 57.
9. חַלָּה. *The oblation-cake* from women to priests. Ch. iv. sec. 37.
10. עָרְלָה. *The profane.* Young trees not yet yielding fruit to be eaten. Ch. iii. sec. 35.
11. בִּכּוּרִים. *The first-fruits* to be offered in the Temple. Ch. iii. sec. 34.

II. מוֹעֵד. FEASTS.

1. שַׁבָּת. *Sabbath.* Things lawful and unlawful. Ch. xxiv. sec. 139.
2. עֵירוּבִין. *Confusions* of bounds between things sabbatic and common. Ch. x. sec. 89.
3. פְּסָחִים. *Passovers.* How observed. Ch. x. sec. 88.
4. שְׁקָלִים. *Shekels* to be paid. Ch. viii. sec. 52.
5. יוֹמָא. *Day* of Expiation. Ch. viii. sec. 61.
6. סוּכָּה. *Feast of Tabernacles.* Ch. v. sec. 53.
7. בֵּיצָה. *The Egg* (or יוֹם טוֹב *Feast-day*). Concerning Feasts. Ch. v. sec. 41.
8. רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה. *The New Civil Year.* Ch. iv. sec. 35.
9. תַּעֲנִיוֹת. *Fasting.* Ch. iv. sec. 44.
10. מְגִלָּה. *The Roll* of Esther. Ch. iv. sec. 33.
11. מוֹעֵד קָטָן. *The lesser Feast.* Days between Passover and Tabernacles. Ch. iii. sec. 23.
12. חֲגִיגָה. *The Solemnity.* When every male person must appear, or be exempted. Ch. iii. sec. 23.

III. נָשִׁים. Women.

1. יְבָמוֹת. *Brothers' wives* to be married or not. Ch. xvi. sec. 123.
2. כְּתוּבוֹת. *Writings* of contract. Ch. xiii. sec. 111.
3. נְדָרִים. *Vows* obligatory or not. Ch. xi. sec. 90.
4. נָזִיר. *Nazarite.* His obligations. Ch. ix. sec. 60.
5. סוֹטָה. *Unfaithful woman.* How to be tried. Ch. ix. sec. 67.
6. גִּיטִּין. *Divorces.* How performed. Ch. ix. sec. 75.
7. קִידּוּשִׁין. *Espousals.* How made. Ch. iv. sec. 47.

IV. נְזִיקִין. Injuries.

1. בָּבָא קַמָּא. *First gate.* Damages. Ch. x. sec. 79.
2. בָּבָא מְצִיעָא. *Middle gate.* Things found. Gains. Ch. x. sec. 101.
3. בָּבָא בַּתְרָא. *Last gate.* Agreements. Ch. x. sec. 86.
4. סַנְהֶדְרִין. *Sanhedrin.* Courts. Ch. xi. sec. 71.
5. מַכּוֹת. *Stripes.* Rules for inflicting. Ch. iii. sec. 34.
6. שְׁבוּעוֹת. *Oaths.* Rules for administering. Ch. viii. sec. 62.
7. עֵדֻיּוֹת. *Witnesses.* Ch. viii. sec. 74.
8. עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה. *Strange worship.* Ch. v. sec. 50.
9. פִּרְקֵי אָבוֹת. *Chapters of the Fathers.* Sentences of Wise Men. Ch. vi. sec. 106.
10. הוֹרָיוֹת. *Instructions* for judges. Ch. iii. sec. 20.

V. קָדָשִׁים. Sacred Things.

1. זְבָחִים. *Sacrifices.* Ch. xiv. sec. 101.
2. מְנָחוֹת. *Oblations.* Ch. xiii. sec. 93.
3. חוּלִּין. *Things profane* or unclean. Ch. xii. sec. 74.
4. בְּכוֹרוֹת. *Firstlings.* Ch. ix. sec. 73.
5. עֲרָכִין. *Reckonings* for redemption. Ch. ix. sec. 50.
6. תְּמוּרָה. *Exchange* of victims. Ch. vii. sec. 35.
7. כְּרִיתוֹת. *Cutting off.* Ch. vi. sec. 43.
8. מְעִילָה. *Error in* sacrificing. Ch. vi. sec. 38.
9. תָּמִיד. *Perpetual sacrifice.* Ch. vii. sec. 33.
10. מִדּוֹת. *Measurements* of Temple. Ch. v. sec. 33.
11. קִנִּים. *Young birds* offered by the poor. Ch. iii. sec. 15.

VI. טְהָרוֹת. Purifications.

1. כֵּלִים. *Vessels.* How to be cleansed. Ch. xxx. sec. 254.
2. אֹהָלוֹת. *Tents* or houses to be cleansed. Ch. xviii. sec. 134.
3. נְגָעִים. *Plagues* of leprosy. Ch. xiv. sec. 115.
4. פָּרָה. *The red heifer.* Ch. xii. sec. 96.
5. טְהָרוֹת. *Purifications.* Ch. x. sec. 92.
6. מִקְוָאוֹת. *Baths.* Ch. x. sec. 71.
7. נִדָּה. *Separation* of menstruous woman. Ch. x. sec. 79.
8. מַכְשִׁירִין. *Liquids that pollute* vegetables. Ch. vi. sec. 54.
9. זָבִים. *Pollutions* at night. Ch. v. sec. 32.
10. טְבוּל יוֹם. *Daily washing.* Ch. iv. sec. 26.
11. יָדַיִם. *Hands* to be washed. Ch. iv. sec. 22.
12. עוּקְצִים. *Fruit-stems.* Ch. iii. sec. 28.

Note B, page 60.

The Jerusalem Talmud is a small book in comparison with the Babylonian. It has passed through very few printed editions, and is contained in *one* volume. A learned and laborious Rabbinical scholar, Zechariah Frankel, of Breslau, has just given the Hebrew world an elaborate volume,[1] in which he endeavours to throw new light on the text, and prepare the way for an enlarged and corrected edition. He considers that the work of the Palestinian doctors has been neglected, and hopes that it will henceforth receive more attention. For the sake of history, both Jewish and Christian, I hope it will.

The brief synopsis of the Mishnah given in the preceding note should be followed by a notice of the contents of the first Talmud, the Babylonian being too late and too miscellaneous to be of much value in relation to the Karaites. Dr. Frankel says that 'the Jerusalem Talmud at this day in our hands is only on the four Orders *Zeraim*, *Moëd*, *Nashim*, *Nezikim*, and the first three chapters of the Title *Niddah* (in the sixth Order). On the Title *Shabbat* (in the second Order) is wanting the Jerusalem *Gemára* (or explanatory complement) from chapter xxi. to the end of the Title. *Gemára* is also wanting to chapter iii. of the Title *Makkot* (in the fourth Order).

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[1] מבוא הירושלמי מאת זכריה פראנקעל. *Einleitung in den Jerusalemischen Talmud.* Von Dr. Z. Frankel. Breslau, 1870.

But to the chapters *Edyot* and *Abót* (in the fourth Order) there is no *Gemára* in either the Jerusalem or Babylonian Talmud. But the Jerusalem has the advantage over the Babylonian in containing a *Gemára* on the whole Order *Zeraím*, whereas in the Babylonian there is no *Gemára* found, except on the Title *Berachóth*. The Jerusalem has also *Gemára* on the Title *Shekalim*, where the Babylonian has none' A few other peculiarities of the same kind are noted by Frankel, who prosecuted a careful comparative study of the two Talmuds for the sake of accomplishing his object.

CHAPTER VIII.

BABYLONIA.—THE TALMUD.

FROM the time of the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, full 600 years before Christ, Babylonia was rather a home for the Hebrew people than a land of cruel bondage, like Egypt. They were still free to teach their children the rudiments of doctrine and forms of worship, and although the doctrine was deteriorated, and the worship exceedingly imperfect, they paid great regard to the instruction of their children. There were numerous schools for boys of all classes, but some of them rose high above the rest. The Jewish population was constantly replenished, if it was not almost entirely sustained, by Jews from Palestine, —for the remnants of the ten tribes which had not returned to the land of their fathers in the reigns of Cyrus and Darius were nearly or entirely melted away in the East. Eminent masters raised the Babylonian colleges into high repute, continually attracted scholars from all parts of the world, and flourished long enough to leave names to history. The chief schools were those of *Nahardea, Sora,* and *Pumbeditha.*

Nahardea was once a strong city on the banks of the *nahar,* or canal, that united the Tigris and the Euphrates, north of Babylon, and had possessed a school from time immemorial, but the city and the school were greatly raised when a Babylonian Jew, named Samuel, who had been sent to Tiberias, and there studied under R. Judah

the Holy, returned to his native country, rich in learning, being a clever astronomer, and conversant with his master's favourite study, the laws of the Mishnah. He was chosen rector of the school, which he governed with great success, was followed by others who upheld and even advanced its reputation, until Nahardea was sacked by an enemy, the school broken up, and the students dispersed over Babylonia, in the year of our Lord 258.

The school of *Sora*, on the Euphrates, also an old establishment, received its renovating impulse from one of the most successful scholars of Rabbi Judah at Tiberias, Abba Arekka. This Rabbi gave a great impulse to the study of the Mishnah, now losing its secondary character, and treated as if it were a primary authority,—itself the Law. Arekka undertook to revise it finally, and published it in the state to which it was advanced when made the basis of the Babylonian Talmud. This school, pleasantly situated on the Euphrates, sometimes had a thousand or even twelve hundred students, with twenty *Amóras*, or Mishnaic doctors, who gave their instructions orally, after the Eastern manner. This rector, being ambitious to advance the school to be first of all the Jewish academies, by impetuous energy, and great talent, commanded reverential acquiescence. Like Rabbi Judah of Tiberias, he enjoyed the friendship of the king, and was so beloved of the people, that after his death the Jews of both Palestine and Babylonia refrained from the usual display of myrtles and garlands, and had no music at their festivities. No man could follow him in that rectorate with any comparable success; the glory of Sora languished, and early in the fourth century it utterly expired.

The school of *Pumbeditha*, a town situate at the mouth of the canal which once gave a name to Nahardea, was founded a few years before the dispersion of that population, under the guidance of R. Judah, the son of Ezekiel;

both father and son being zealots for the Oral Law, and the whole family imbued with the same spirit of tradition. A thorough ecclesiastic, he was as much a pope in the synagogue as ever was an Innocent or a Benedict in the papal chair. He sternly enforced, not the statutes of Leviticus, but those of the fourth Order of the Mishnah on נזקים, *Injuries*. In language he was a Hebrew purist, and rejected the barbarous innovations which had reduced the speech of Moses and the Prophets to a coarse jargon, made worse and worse as the Jew-boys flocked into Pumbeditha from the towns of Syria and Central Asia. As he advanced in life he plunged more deeply into the dark mysteries of 'the work of Genesis,' a book of Kabbalistic craft, which taught how to make a magical charm out of the letters of certain words in the first Book of Moses. So he pretended to unfold the mysteries of nature to hundreds of youths, who listened to the unintelligible utterances with wonder in proportion to their absurdity. Six devoted brothers squandered their energies in the same wild and objectless pursuit, and one of them is counted first contributor to the collection called *Midrash Rabboth*. They wrought hard in raking together extremely miscellaneous materials to swell the Talmud, and in endeavouring to reduce them into order after the several treatises.

The rector of Pumbeditha was now a much greater personage than the *Resh Glutha*, or 'Head of the Captivity,' now but a helpless patriarch, without means of enforcing submission on twelve or thirteen thousand youths who crowded the schools, while masters were heaping up mountains of incomprehensible subtilty to be the future thesaurus of law, philosophy, and legend for all Judaism. While the masters were absorbed in this fruitless labour, the disciples spent their leisure in bragging insubordination to the one person who would fain be

obeyed as sovereign of the Jews, and their scant hours of study were lost in acquiring a spurious dialectic which made people of the world stare, and gave rise to the proverb, 'Such an one comes from Pumbeditha, where they can drive a camel through the eye of a needle.'

One would need to graduate in such a school, if he were expected so to analyse and describe the Talmud of Babylon as to convey a clear account of it to the mind of the reader; but that is not my present object, and I doubt whether two Rabbanites have yet been heard of who could do it to the entire satisfaction of each other. Perplexity increases on the student as he pursues his investigation. He wishes to understand the Mishnah fully, but they tell him that to do so he must not rest there. If he turns back to the Law to which the Mishnah constantly refers, he may often succeed, but on points of Jewish casuistry or superstition that Law sheds no light, except to demonstrate their nullity. Therefore, he is referred back again to the Mishnah which has already failed him, and therefore the Mishnah has to be expounded by the Gemára, which ought to be appended to every chapter of each treatise, for the sake of explanation. But a multitude of chapters, even entire treatises, have no Gemára. Often, when the Gemára is full, it is likely to be contradictory, and where scanty, it disappoints. In that case he is referred to voluminous commentaries, where the hard questions are hammered harder and harder, until, after all, he is bidden to wait until Elijah the Tishbite comes to settle everything.

It is not to be imagined that the Jews of the present time, in parts of the world where common intelligence has penetrated, receive the entire contents of the Talmud as having any religious authority, or that, even in the sixth century, it would have long survived its birth, if the lands of the Tigris and Euphrates had not been sunk in bar-

barism, and if the Hebrew people themselves had not partaken of the same barbarism, and borrowed largely the heathen follies of astrology, angel-worship, necromancy, and witchcraft, all which were freely reproduced amongst themselves. However, for instruction here and there; for speculation without end, where men are idle or weak enough to suffer it; for amusement, also, it may serve a few choice Rabbinic Hebrew scholars of taste congenial, and power of their own to break through the spell of Kabbala and enigma. But if the Talmud were taken to feed the soul and regulate the life, it would be worse than useless.

Suffice it now to note that about 311 years after the completion of the Mishnah by R. Judah at Tiberias, the rectors and their friends at Sora and Pumbeditha, and again at Nahardea, sealed up the vast labour under the hand of Rabbi Josè at Pumbeditha. This event took place in the year 498, but the publication, according to Elijah the Levite, was not until 506, by which time 'Talmud,' as they speak, became the subject of a special science. This called forth the active opposition of a multitude of sober-minded and conscientious Jews, who eventually assumed or accepted a new name, but never acknowledged themselves to be a new sect, and never ought to have been so regarded.

The external form of the Talmud can be soon described. On the opening of a folio volume the page presents in the middle a mass of larger Hebrew type, more or less, as may happen, just as we see in the old editions of Lyndewode's 'Provincial,' in the Codes of Justinian and Theodosius, or any such collections, when the original text is thus exhibited, and surrounded in much larger proportion with smaller type, consisting of comments and explanations. In this case the central text consists (usually) of the Mishnah as it was revised by Rab, first rector of the

school at Sora, after the death of his former master, Rabbi at Tiberias. The Gemára, which follows in continuation, is the original commentary on the Mishnah, or rather, enlargement of it by the sayings of other doctors. The surrounding mass, as has been observed, is very miscellaneous, made up of disputes, explanations, questions settled and questions unanswerable, with legends, fables, and disquisitions to a vast extent. There are many, very many editions of the Talmud, but a sufficiently exact idea of the size is given, if we say that it fills twelve or thirteen thick and closely-printed folio volumes. There are early editions printed at Venice by German printers, and representing, I believe, the Talmud as originally written. Then there are subsequent editions, expurgated, by order of the Inquisition, of everything offensive to Christians. Then, again, there are editions of the Talmud restored to its former state. Parts of the great work have also been printed, either because some portions are more used by the Rabbis than others, or because impressions have been begun and not finished.

I should suppose that the student who wishes to become learned in the Talmud, or knowing in its bibliology, needs not go any farther than the British Museum, where the Hebrew Catalogue will direct him to abundant material.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KARAITES AFTER THE TALMUD.

No sooner was the Talmud published, and made use of as an authority for teachers and rulers in the synagogues, than great opposition was manifested. We may suppose that when Rabbi Judah the Holy, as if imitating Simon the Just, yet advancing far beyond him, and diverging very widely, applied himself to codify the decisions and sayings of the Elders, and publish them, even as Simon had published the Hagiographa, but did no more, the conscience of the more enlightened Jews was not violently shocked. They were erring in the same direction, and would not hastily mistrust so good a man; nor does it appear that even they foresaw the evils to which his excessive industry would lead future generations. The editor of the Mishnah had professed, and perhaps heartily intended, to pay homage to the Law of Moses, not to supersede it. But the Gemára, afterwards attacked, consisted of a larger collection of sentences, less judicial, and far more trifling. The confused mass of writings that were now added to the central text of Mishnah, and Gemára made that text, not the Mosaic Law, the real basis of comment, and the ideal standard of faith and practice.

The entire complication was presented to the Jews as at once a code of law and a thesaurus of wisdom. They called it תלמוד, *Talmud*, 'Learning,' and declared it com-

plete, as if it were perfect and finally conclusive. This was too much to be accepted by those who held God's Word in due reverence, and too much also for those who were impatient of the assumption of authority by R. Josè, as implied by the final publication.

To transcribe and circulate the Talmud must have been a work of considerable time. The masses of manuscript for a single copy of the whole collection would be a load for a beast of burden. Men able and willing to learn out of it, and to teach and govern others according to its prescriptions, could not all at once be found; and when men were found to undertake the perplexing service, it would cost the cleverest of them long time to learn, and much longer time to make any considerable impression with his ill-digested acquirement. An impression, however, was made after much perseverance, and it was deep, deeply captivating, or deeply repulsive. The masters of Talmud found that the Hebrew synagogues beyond the Euphrates and the Tigris, the Greek-speaking Jews on the Nile, and the remote captivities on the Volga and the Danube, were so far apart in all respects, except their universally recognised descent from Jacob, which was an indissoluble bond, and the common reproach or glory of the name of Jew, that they could not be brought into a simultaneous movement, not even in obedience to those great Eastern masters on whom the wisdom of Daniel was supposed to rest.

The western synagogues were agitated. At Constantinople, on the ides of February A.D. 529, the Emperor Justinian issued a constitution to correct irregularities, which, as he learned, had occurred in some synagogues, causing great confusion and trouble. Hebrew, it appeared, was introduced into Greek synagogues, and Greek into Hebrew. Congregations were troubled with languages they could not understand, while some members of the

congregations, rather amused than troubled, were carried away with the charm of empty sounds. 'But the δευτέρωσις, as it is called among them,'—which meant the *Mishnah*, the secondary Law, as explained by Talmudists,—'we utterly prohibit, as it neither agrees with the Holy Scripture, nor was it handed down by the Prophets from above, but is the invention of men who speak from the earth only, and have not one thing that is divine in them. Therefore let them read only the words that are sacred, opening the sacred books themselves, and not concealing what is said in them, nor bringing in vain words that were written *elsewhere*,'—written in Babylonian manuscripts,—'contrived for the purpose of setting aside the plainer words which they' (the sacred books) 'contain.' Farther on, Justinian ordains capital punishment for any among the Jews who shall deny the Resurrection or the Last Judgment, or teach that angels are not of God's creation; and he does this in order that the Hebrew nation may be kept clear of the error of those blasphemous atheists. 'And we beseech those who hear the Holy Scriptures read in this language (Greek) or in that (Hebrew), to be on their guard against the wickedness of those interpreters, and let them not confine themselves to the mere letters,'—the Kabbalistic follies of Pumbeditha,—'but rather get a taste of the things themselves, and gain a perception of the inner meaning.'[1]

They who suppose the Karaites to have been Sadducees might seem to find some confirmation of their opinion in the latter part of this decree. But there are a few suggestions which they should accept before coming to a precipitate conclusion. Justinian, it must be remembered, does not speak in the language of a friend,

[1] Ἰουστινιανοῦ Νεαραί, διάταξις ρμς'.

neither can it be presumed that he possessed any accurate knowledge of the faith of any party among the 'Jews, Samaritans, and Heretics,' whose demerits were probably equal in his sight. The language of the decree can only express his persuasion on the strength of reports concerning them; and as the incredulity of the Karaite passed for unbelief, the decree was, no doubt, framed accordingly. The other suggestion is that, even if there were Karaites who, under the injurious influence of passionate reaction, had cast off all faith, which would not have been at all singular, that circumstance, however much to be regretted, would not suffice to gainsay the mass of contrary evidence which is accumulated in these pages, with the express declarations of their creed, and the whole tenor of their history. But after all, Sadducees properly so called, not Karaites, may be the persons intended in the condemnatory portion of the first part, which is most distinctly levelled against the teachers of tradition, and a fair interpretation of the edict would effectually protect the 'sons of the Reading' from any official molestation.

So far as I can ascertain, the name of Karaite does not yet occur in history, but first comes to view about the middle of the eighth century, in connection with the Chozars, a rude but powerful nation north of the Caucasus, among whom the Karaite Jews must have been for a long time previously well known. Chozar was 'in the land of Togarmah,'[1] where dwelt the Turkomans. R. Joseph Ben Gorion enumerates Chozar and Patzinak among the sons of Togarmah, whose names descended to tribes that were spread over those regions. Both names are produced from the Russian chronicles by the historian Karamsin. In his history of Russia, the Chozars are described as having possessions

[1] Gen. x. 3; 1 Chron. i. 6; Ezek. xxvii. 14.

on the Sea of Azof, and they also appear with the Petchnigans, or tribe of Patzinak, on the western side of the Black Sea. They dwelt also along the Volga, which river they called Atel, and extended their conquests to the North Sea. They were a numerous people, victorious in war, prosperous in commerce, and famous in all the East. Their government was mild, and under it persons of every religion enjoyed perfect freedom. Their chief settlement lay north-west of the Caspian Sea, which was called the Sea of Chozar. It is therefore evident that the boundaries of the kingdom (if we may for a moment so speak of the country occupied by an ancient pastoral people, living for the most part in tents and waggons) must have extended over a wide region north of the Danube, the Euxine and Caspian Seas, and the Caucasian mountains. They were conquered in the year 945 by King Sviatoslaf, and their name, otherwise almost forgotten, was preserved in the archives of the Muscovite.

The *Sepher Chozri*, or Book of the Chozarite, first published in Hebrew, with a Latin version by John Buxtorf the Younger,[1] contains a statement of the Karaite con-

[1] Basileæ, 1660. So much depends on a clear apprehension of the authorship of this Book of Chozri, that the following abstract of Buxtorf's account of it is presented to the reader. No one has yet expressed any doubt concerning the first editor and publisher of this book in Arabic. It was Judah the Levite, who flourished about A.M. 4900, according to the Jewish computation, or, as we count it, A.D. 1140. He was a contemporary of R. Abraham Aben Ezra, who became eminent a little later than he, and made honourable mention of him after his decease. R. Judah himself states that he is not author of the book, but that it was the work of a certain Rabbi who lived 400 years before him, whom he does not name, but calls him חָבֵר, *the companion* (or Rabbi), in a passage which occurs in the commencement of the work. He there says that a friend of the King Alchozri, whose name was Rabbi Isaac of Sangar, had, many years before the original composition of the book, by his wisdom converted the King of Chozar to the Jewish faith in the land of Togarmah, as was made known by certain writings that were extant in the Arabic

troversy in the form of conversations between the heathen king of the Chozars, named Bulan, and one Rabbi Isaac, of Sangar, probably a Bithynian. The subject of the supposed conversations was the respective claims of the Jewish and Christian religions, in view of the king's choosing one of them for himself. After discussing the doctrine of the Karaites and that of the Rabbanites, king Bulan, as it is said, was persuaded by R. Isaac to become a proselyte to the Jewish religion under the Rabbanite form.

This Jew must have been in Chozar about A.D. 740, or from that to 760. Now some will still contend that the Karaites were a sect founded by Ahnan, in Babylonia, at some time from the year 740 to 763. Jöst, who takes for granted that it was so, gives Karaism that date for its commencement. Here two events, the mission of the Sangarite to Chozar, and the secession of Ahnan and the Karaites in Babylonia, are assigned by Rabbanite conjectures to the same period; or, if the distance be taken between the earliest and the latest dates, the secession of Ahnan may be set down at 740, and the mission of the Sangarite to Chozar at 763, twenty-three years later. But I leave it with the reader to judge whether even so, a sect founded at Pumbeditha on the Euphrates could, within twenty-three years, have been

language, and were noted for the excellent and learned answers of that wise man concerning the law, the Kabbalah, and other subjects. R. Judah the Levite, being a Spaniard and a poet, finding these writings, translated them into Hebrew. R. Judah Muscat attributes the praise of composition to Judah the Levite, but the original account to R. Isaac of Sangar himself, of whom it is said that the foundation was, and that it was he who hallowed the name of God by his argument. Counting back, therefore, 400 years before Judah the Levite, who flourished about the year 1140, the friend of the king of Chozar wrote about the year 740. But if the conversion of the king took place כמה שנים some years before that, it is evident that I have not founded my argument of the date of R. Isaac's mission on any hasty calculation. (*Præfatio ad Lectorem.*)

founded, organised, and sent forth a colony of emigrants to the banks of the Volga, that could also become established, well known, and its habits even be long remembered there. Could its propagators, in so short a time, change their habitations and their language; and not only establish themselves among the migratory and independent Chozars, but by the influence of a new religion, so change their morals, habits, and character, while scattered over the dominions of the inquiring sovereign, as to become the successful guides of a converted race of people, that people being no inconsiderable portion of his subjects, who, for numbers and respectability, became worthy candidates for the honour of receiving the king as a fellow-member of their community? But what we find in the Book of Chozri demonstrates that such a transformation had actually taken place, as could not have been effected in one or two generations; and therefore it is clear that Ahnan could not be the father of the Karaites whom R. Isaac found in Chozar.

There can be no doubt that they had been settled in those northern regions long enough to be known and compared with other Jews. They were not immigrants and strangers, but a distinct class of persons of established reputation; and this is quite consistent with what the Karaites in the Crimea tell of a grant, or *Privilegium*, as Köhl the German traveller in South Russia calls it, given them by Mohammed. Now Mohammed died in the year 632, and this alleged grant would have been more than a century later than the edict of Justinian against the Talmud, which is so worded that a Karaite might have dictated it, yet without the *name*.

The ancient residence of Jews in that part of the world is attested by existing monuments. Since the last war with Russia, several of the most ancient gravestones in the burial-ground of Djufut Kalé, in the Crimea, have

been examined; the tracings are preserved, and some of them were early published in St. Petersburg.[1] If the Hebrew antiquarians are not mistaken, one of them bears date of a death in the 702nd year of the 'Captivity,' and others also are dated in the same style; all such inscriptions having been cut before the era of the Creation was adopted by the Jews. Now if the Captivity be, as is believed, that of Sennacherib, the year 702 answers to the *sixth* of the Christian era, according to the common computation. The gravestone so dated, and others after it, may or may not have been those of persons holding the Karaite doctrine, nor does the mere fact of a corpse being buried in that ground at any time prove that the deceased was a Karaite, for even R. Isaac Sangari, who argued against them, was buried with their dead in the Crimea. But there is not the same uncertainty at later dates, and the inscriptions which may, with very rare exceptions, be pronounced Karaite, date so early as A.M. 4090, answering to A.D. 330.

The interlocutors in the Book of the Chozarite are the king Bulan and Isaac the Jew. The Jew has just delivered a long parable, intended to set forth the special favour shown to Israel, who was taken into the friendship of the King of Heaven. At the close of the parable, he extols the Priests and Levites—as if the Priests and Levites were still able to discharge their peculiar functions—'Living on the bread of the Lord, standing in the Lord's house from their childhood, like Samuel, and having no need to seek their livelihood, but left at leisure for Divine Worship all their days.' Then he asks,—'What think you of the works of men like these; the purity of their souls; the perfection of their actions?' Chozri answers:—

[1] *Mélanges asiatiques*, tom. v.; livraisons 2 et 3.

'Certainly this is the highest degree of perfection; nothing can surpass it, except it be the excellence of angels, and they who are so well prepared to receive it may reasonably expect the gift of prophecy, especially now that the Divine Presence is already with them. And since they thus worship, it is not necessary for them to separate themselves from the world, and betake themselves to solitude. But pray let me know what you have to tell me about the Karaites, for I see them very diligent in their worship, more so than the Rabbanites, and I hear that their reasons are more convincing, and more in agreement with the simple meaning of their law.'

The Jew is then represented as meeting this commendation of the cogency of their reasons, and the simplicity of their interpretation of the Law, by descanting at great length on the evils that result from the exercise of private judgment. He heaps up all the instances of error and absurdity he can think of, to exemplify the mischief of a man's having any 'wisdom or judgment of his own concerning the Law,' which cannot be understood without a direct gift from God. 'Therefore,' the Rabbi insists, 'we must not presume to tread in the steps of our fathers, and pretend to be wise in the Law.' After some further discussion on the subject, the Chozarite concedes that a superior authority on earth is necessary for the right interpretation of God's Law. On this concession the Jew proceeds to argue:—

'If oral tradition be such an authority, then we and the Karaites are alike bound by it, and even every one who confesses that the Law, which was found in this form'—that is to say, written without points and accents —'is called the Law of Moses.'[1]

The Chozarite replies:—

[1] This allusion to points and accents will be considered further on.

'So say the Karaites, but now that they have found the Law perfect'—that is to say, written with points and accents—'they have no need of the tradition.'

To this the Jew answers that, if they require the help of points and accents to make the sense of the *words* clear, much more must they stand in need of ample instruction to make them understand the meaning of *things*, which lies far more deeply hidden than that of words; and endeavours to strengthen his position by urging against the Karaites the common-place instances which will be noted elsewhere. He further contrasts the scantiness of the Karaites' store of information with the abundance of traditional instruction in which the Rabbanites abound, and winds up triumphantly, as he imagines, by putting this question to the king:

'O King of Chozar, have you ever heard any disciple of the Karaites speak of what I have mentioned to you? Do they speak of anything to be relied upon? Is there any tradition concerning which they have a common judgment? Are they not all in a state of dissension, whether the subject in question relates to Masoras, or points, or accents,[1] or what things are forbidden, or what allowed, or what decided?'

The Chozarite is forced to answer:—

'I have neither seen nor heard anything of that sort; but what I have seen and heard is, that they are diligent to the utmost of their power.'

The Rabbi turns this praise against them, and condemns their diligence as no better than a sign of self-sufficiency. After this the dialogue dwindles away into a mere exchange of common-places. The king takes Isaac's word for everything; no Karaite is summoned to answer for himself and his brethren; the king's hea-

[1] This apparatus, then, is *found*, but not yet *settled*. This will be confirmed presently.

thenish impartiality is but indifference, and all that can be gathered from the account is that Karaism was a very suitable name given to the good old principle of adhering, as Isaiah said, 'to the Law and to the testimony.' We see nothing sectarian in their origin nor in their position, but perceive that those Jews in the land of Togarmah were called *Karaim*, or Scripturists, and accepted the honourable designation not as a note of reproach, but as a mark of distinction which effectually saved them from being confounded with Traditionists.[1]

We must bear in mind that the Chozars were at this time one of the most numerous and formidable peoples of the northern regions of Europe and Asia, and impartial witnesses to the true character of the Karaites, who had been long dwelling amongst them, and openly professing their simple doctrine. The testimony, although given by an adversary, is explicit and in their favour. Other facts mentioned in the present chapter concur in bringing us to the conclusion that soon after the publication of the Talmud, in what we now call Turkey and Russia, partly within and partly beyond what were then the bounds of the Roman empire on the north and east, Jews of the persuasion either then or later called Karaite, were *troubled* by the innovations of Mishnaic or Talmudic teachers, and sought protection in their ancient manner of worship from a Christian emperor.

For the present we leave Ahnan, the earnest witness against the Talmud, and contemporary of Isaac of Sangar, to be chief subject of a separate chapter, and proceed to offer a few observations on various names given to the people whose history now opens in full view before us.

How they were formerly designated, and how they received their present name, is worth inquiring. They

[1] ספר כוזרי, *The Book of Chozri*, part iii.

say that they were first called *Jerusalemites*, because, after the destruction of the holy city by Titus, they, more than any of their brethren, gathered round its ruins. 'This they did,' says one of their own writers, 'through desire for their sanctuary, which was the excellency of their strength, the delight of their heart, and the consolation of their soul.' For a similar reason, when Ahnan and his followers betook themselves to the open country in consequence of dissension with the other Jews, they were called *Dwellers in the Desert*. When they were openly cursed for rejecting the Kabbala, they were branded as *Excommunicates*. Slanderously, and without any foundation in truth, they were cried down as *Sadokites*, or Sadducees, as if they were followers of Sadoc, who denied the doctrine of future rewards and punishments; and *Baithosites*, from his companion *Baithos*. Maimonides, Abraham ben Dior, and other antagonists, called them *Cuthites* and *Samaritans*, common epithets to express contemptuous hatred, one of which, it will be remembered, the Pharisees, blaspheming, applied to our Lord. The men who cast them out most falsely denounced them as *Epikrusim*, Epicureans, and *Minim*, heretics. Aben Ezra, with less vulgarity, sometimes calls them *Dividers against our Fathers*, and then again, with greater bitterness, *those liars*. R. Azariah, with others, making some show of discrimination, says that there are two kinds of sects, some consisting of those who merely slight the Oral Law, whereas others altogether deny it, and these latter 'deserve to be burnt in the place of ashes.'

Karaim—Karaites, as we say—or Readers, is their ancient and proper name. Some observe that they are proud of it, as well they may be, and certainly they so call themselves, always regarding it as their most honour-

able title. Their Liturgy[1] bears it uniformly, as I believe. There are various editions of the Karaite Liturgy in the British Museum. One, printed in Venice A.D. 1529, in four volumes, quarto, is a fine copy, well printed, the first two volumes being rather broader than the third and fourth. It appears by notes written in Italian on the fly-leaves, and by various other marks, that these two were sent to Venice, or left there, for the purpose of obtaining a reprint. The writing appears to have been of the eighteenth century, before the entrance of the French into Italy at the time of the French Revolution. One of the notes at the end of the fourth volume runs thus:—'A *ricordo* for those who have to print these two Hebrew books. These are two Hebrew books of the sect of Hebrews called Caraites, who are different and schismatics from the belief of the other Hebrews whom they call Rabbanites, on which account these Caraites, who are to pay the cost of printing the said two books, wish the printers (*signori stampatori*) to be careful not to trust them to the Hebrews who usually take charge of the offices, correct the press, and amend the errors; for, being enemies of the said Caraites, they will corrupt the texts, and, through enmity, commit frauds of such a sort that the said books, after coming to light, will be of no service. Therefore, every time that the printers wish to do a fine thing and be well paid, they must make use of Christian persons who are to be found in Venice or in Padova, skilled and learned in the Hebrew tongue, who will take the work in hand and get these books printed.'

Or they call themselves בני מקרא, *Sons of the Reading*, or, as we should say, *the Scripture*. According to the authorities quoted by Trigland, whom I follow in this enumeration of names, others called them so because they

[1] סדר התפלות כמנהג קהל הקראים.

had no faith in the new 'law given by word of mouth,' inasmuch as it was not written from the mouth of prophets or seers, but invented in the time of the transgressors of the Law of the Lord (Mal. ii. 8) by private persons, who collected it from other sources and wrote it down.

Those private persons the Karaites did not call Rabbis, but withholding that venerated title, gave them the name of Rabbanites, increasers, or usurers, that is to say, men who were busy in making for themselves usury, or gain out of the Law, and wishing to be wise above what is written, despised the Karaites, or Readers of Holy Scripture.

Maimonides professes to mark the time and occasion of their assuming the title, representing that it begun in Egypt, when Simon ben Shetakh returned from Alexandria to Jerusalem, in the time of King Alexander Jannaï. Ben Shetakh then began, as the Karaites relate, to propagate and insist upon the mysteries of the Oral Law. 'Thus,' says Maimonides, 'those people were called קראים *Readers*,' by way of contempt and derision. R. Mordecai the Karaite, in his reply to inquiries from Trigland, confirms the statement of Maimonides. At first, indeed, the followers of Ben Tabbaï, colleague of Ben Shetakh, but his opponent, were called 'the House of Tabbaï,' but that sectarian title was quickly changed for the more appropriate name, inasmuch as, being studious of the Scripture, they did not lean upon the broken reed of an allegorical and confused interpretation.'[1]

Some say that they were called Ahnanites, and it is possible that they were so called in derision or contempt, but even this is not yet certain. A name, however, given by their enemies could not in the slightest degree affect

[1] Notitia Karæorum ex Mardochai, Karæi recentioris, tractatu haurienda. Hamburg. et Leips. 1714. Ed. J. C. Wolfius, cap. ii.

the question of their origin, nor weaken the evidence which proves their existence before the time of Ahnan. Sharastani, if I well remember, so calls them and professes to give a brief account of their history, but betrays utter ignorance of the matter which he pretends to treat. Sometimes, however, he is quoted, and therefore the reader should be informed that he is utterly unworthy of credit in anything he says about the Jews, of whom, as on perusal instantly appears, he knew little and gives no coherent information. His tales are often as irrational as an Indian cosmogony. But there is an extract in the Oriental Library of Asseman which may be considered trustworthy as to the name alone. In a note of events during the episcopate of Philoxenus of Nisibis, the learned Maronite collects that at that time 'the Jews also had a quarrel concerning their primacy. For some of those in Tiberias elected one David, but they in Babylonia chose Daniel, of the sect of the Ahnanites, who set aside the Sabbath, and observe the fourth day of the week instead of the seventh. The case,' he says, 'was brought before the Caliph, who decided that when ten men of any religion of Christians, or Jews, or Magians, agreed together on any arrangement for ordering worship in their own manner, it should be lawful for them.'[1] But the Karaites, as we well know, did not so set aside the Sabbath-day, and therefore the persons called Ahnanites could not be of the same persuasion as the Ahnan of whom we speak, or they might have been a degenerate offshoot from a better stock.[2]

[1] Bibliotheca Orientalis, tom. ii. p. 346.

[2] While this chapter is passing through the press, I find strong confirmation of this view of Ahnan and the Ahnanites. The reader shall find it in my Preface.

CHAPTER X.

VOWEL-POINTS AND ACCENTS.

A subject for literary research.

THE subject of this chapter should be interesting to general readers, but Hebrew scholars will only find enough to stimulate inquiry. I trust the facts are correctly noted, but I do not press the conclusions to which, for the present, I think I can arrive. For the correction of any error I shall be sincerely thankful, but I cannot persuade myself to keep silence on a subject of so great interest, because I am not yet able to treat it in the confidence of historic certainty. I hope to obtain one facsimile, at least, with some typographical illustration, which may serve a student in prosecuting more thorough investigation.

In justice to our subject we must notice the part taken by Karaites, or alleged to have been taken by them, in the formation of the system of vowel-pointing in the written Hebrew of the Old Testament. There is a passage to the purpose in the Book of Chozri. That book, it will be remembered, contains the narrative of a discussion that dates in the middle of the eighth century of the Christian era. For a clearer apprehension of the particular passage, the context also shall be quoted, observing only that the colloquial form of the book is purely artificial, and that every statement therein rests on the credit

of the author, Rabbi Judah the Levite, who makes his interlocutors speak as follows.[1]

'*Jew.* What would you (King of Chozar) say if you found a variety of reading in one, two, or three books?

'*Chozri* (the King). I would say that we ought to respect the reading found in the majority of books, because an error could not so easily find its way into many as into few; and that we might reject the readings which occur only in single copies, just as we reject the judgment of interpreters, when the minority has to yield to the majority.

'*Jew.* But what would you say when the variation is only in a letter, as for example, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah (iv. 18) צָדוּ צְעָדֵינוּ *they hunt our steps*, where it seems the first word should be with *Resh*, צָרוּ? And in the passage of Psalm xxiv. 4: וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא נָשָׂא לַשָּׁוְא נַפְשִׁי, *and who hath not lifted up my soul to vanity*, when the last word should be נַפְשׁוֹ *his soul*?—and the like in many other places.

'*Chozri.* If it is left for reason to decide in all such cases, reason will make no end of changes in all the books, changes in letters, words, and whole sentences; then in punctuation and accents, so that the sense of a multitude of passages will be changed, for if one be altered, why not all (if reason should see fit so to determine)?

'*Jew.* Then how do you suppose that Moses left his law to the Children of Israel?

'*Chozri.* There can be no doubt that it was a simple book, or writing, without points and without accents, a ספר פשוט מאין נקוד וטעמי, as at this day we see the Book of the Law (in the synagogues), for otherwise, it would be impossible for all to agree, as for example, concerning the unleavened bread, &c. &c.

[1] Sepher Chozri, pars iii. capp. 25–34.

'*Jew.* There can be no doubt that Patakh, Khametz, the other points and the accents, were kept in the heart of the priests [that is to say, that a knowledge of the correct vocal pronunciation of the words was preserved by continuous use in the solemn recitation of the sentences of Scripture, with the very articulate sounds which are now represented by the vowel-signs] because they would need them for performing sacrifice, [in the appointed services of the Tabernacle and the Temple], and for teaching the children of Israel, and in the heart of kings, inasmuch as the kings also were commanded to read the Book of the Law diligently, as it is said; "He shall read in it all the days of his life;" and in the heart of the Judges, &c. And therefore they [i.e. Ezra, and the other members of the great synagogue] appointed seven kings [the seven vowels being so called by the grammarians], and accents, to be signs of those values and powers which Moses received by tradition for them. And what do you think of those things which serve to lay out the Scriptures in form,—first in sentences, then with vowel-pointing, then with accent-signs, then with Massoroth, or critical observations concerning words which are to be written in full, or defectively, to which end even the letters are numbered and noted, so, for example, that we may know that the ו in the word נחון is the middle letter of the Law, and that we may be informed where a Patakh, a Khametz, a Tseré or a Ségol is written out of place? Do you think that these labours of theirs were vain, or that they bestowed care and study on a thing not requisite and necessary?'

The Chozarite assents fully to all that can be said in commendation of this very useful work, and the conversation proceeds:[1]

[1] This account of the completeness of the Masorah may belong to a later date than is assigned to the Book of Chozri, and therefore indicate an

'*Jew.* If the tradition be such, then we and the Karaites are alike bound to abide by it, and so is every one who acknowledges the Law of Moses.

'*Chozri. Even so say the Karaites, but since they have found the Law perfect, they have no need of any Kabbala beyond it.*'[1]

The least that this can mean is that the Karaites have tested the vowel-and-accent system, and found it satisfactory. But if the framers of the system had been also compilers of the Talmud, or even Talmudists in opinion and principle, a perfect agreement between the two parties, at any date, would have been impossible. The controversy, therefore, which had divided them within the synagogues even before the open schism took place, could not have subsisted between fellow-labourers on this great work. Yet it is difficult to understand how the subject could have found its way into the discussion of the merits of Karaism between Sangari and the King of Chozar, unless the Karaites had been in some way concerned with the first introduction of vowel-points and accents. If the Seven Kings, as vowels are called, originated with Ezra, or if the three, *a*, *i*, *o*, were invented by him, and afterwards increased to five, and yet again to seven, during the time of the great synagogue, that would presuppose a prolonged and united literal study of the Hebrew text before the Mishnaic and Talmudic times, and therefore while learned men not yet so widely differing, could unite with calm deliberation in a critical examination of the text, and pursue it with even greater advantage than if, on every matter of interpretation, they were perfectly unanimous.

interpolation, either by the translator from the original Arabic into Hebrew, or by later copyists of the Hebrew.

[1] כן אומרים הקראים אבל אחר שמצאו התורה שלימה אינם צריכים אל הקבלה ׃

This kind of study could be continued until every word was pointed and accented, and nothing remained to engage the industry, or quicken the invention of the studious, beyond the compilation of traditionary sentences for the exposition of the text, and the minute labour of the Masoretes for protecting the text against alteration in time to come. These lines of study were perhaps prosecuted later; but there must have been, in every province or district of Jewry, a time when the Karaites would refrain from advancing any further. They would declare that they found the Law perfect as it was written accurately and in full. Being therewith content, and feeling no need of any oral tradition, they would thenceforth understand the word of God as, by common consent, it had been written, and would reject any change or addition, by whomsoever change or addition might be attempted.

More than ever, then, they deserved to be called the בעלי המקרא: and if there was any one conjuncture more than another, when they could boast of being *possessors of the reading*, it was when they held fast by the established text, and left others to seek out their own inventions. That this was their wise determination was attested to their honour when, perhaps, Ahnan was no more than a child. The infancy of the Chozar Karaites, at least, was past, for they had no inconspicuous place in Jewish history many ages before him.

Full two hundred years after the visit of Sangari to Chozar, a learned Rabbi was travelling in the East in search of rolls of the Law, the oldest and best that could be found, for use in the Chozar Synagogues. One of his manuscripts in the Virkowitsch Collection bears the following note, written by his own hand: 'I, Abraham ben Simchah, from the city of Sephárad, in the kingdom of our converted brethren the Chozars, in the year 1682

of our exile (in Assyria), that is to say, in the 4746th of the Creation, and as our brethren in Matarka (the Christians) count, 986, when the messengers sent by the Prince of Muscovy came from Kioff to our Prince David, to make inquiries concerning their faith in Persia and Media, I was myself in Persia purchasing ancient rolls of the Law, and books of the Prophets and Sacred Writings (כתובים) for the Chozar synagogues. In Elam I heard that there were some very old rolls to be found in Shushan. Thither I went without delay; our brethren showed them to me, and among them I observed the Book of Travels o Rabbi Judah, the Corrector, wherein he tells us that his father Moses the *Pointer* (נקדן) was the first who found out the vowels and accents in order to assist learners in reading. I begged them to sell me the roll, which they would not do, and therefore I copied, word by word, the very important statement of the Corrector, and so have obtained much that will make the verbal meaning clearer. May God help me soon to return in safety to my home! Amen.'[1]

The Prince David mentioned by Ben Simchah does not answer exactly to either of the two Davids in the second list which I have transcribed into the next chapter, whose accession to their dignity is respectively set down at the years 880 and 1070. But these dates are very loosely conjectural. There is a David in the first list, copied from the Cairo manuscript, but without date. Yet it would appear that about the time of Ben Simchah's journey into Persia there was, or lately had been, a Nasi of this name, David. Be that as it may, it is highly interesting to hear that in the last quarter of the tenth century there was found a very old manuscript of the Itinerary of a Karaite Rabbi bearing the title of *Cor-*

[1] Neubauer. Aus der Petersburger Bibliothek Beiträge und Documente zur Geschichte des Karäerthums. Leipzig, 1866, st. 34.

rector, son of a Rabbi bearing that of *Pointer*, and described as discoverer of the vowel-points and accent-signs, or, as might perhaps more correctly describe the fact, appropriator of the vowel-and-accent-system from Arabic writing into Hebrew. Other passages of the Firkowitch manuscripts, as edited in portions by Pinsker, carry us back to the same person, and, with some additional information, confirm the statement.

The beginnings of this adaptation of vowel-points to the Hebrew consonants, for the more easy reading of the sacred text, are noted by Fürst in the terms following, which I have been careful to verify by reference to his authorities.

1. In Irak, or Babylonia, some time in the first half of the sixth century, a Karaite by the name of Akhá, אחא, framed the system of vowel-and-accent-signs, called נקוד, *pointing*. It is remarkable for being written above the letters, and was eventually limited to the Karaites.[1] This was about four centuries and a half before the discovery of the old manuscript in Shushan just now mentioned.

2. Some time later than Akhá, came Mókha, מוחא, whether or not a Karaite is not said. This Rabbi was in Tiberias, and about the year 570 produced another system of signs. It came into use, as an improvement on the former, in Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Arabia. Moses, son of Mókha, elsewhere also called the 'Pointer,' completed his father's system.[2] The Palestinian system was adopted by the Masoretes and Talmudists in general, but if the evidence before us may be trusted, the first discoverers of this invaluable method of conserving the most approved reading of the Hebrew text were Karaites, or, at least, followers of a Karaite. The Book of Chozar,

[1] Fürst, *Gesch. d. Kar.* i. 16. [2] Ibid. 17.

therefore, preserves a faithful record, which reads that *they had found* (מצאו) the vowel-pointing with all its advantages, and were therewith content, insomuch as it perpetuated the reading of the once unpointed text, just as it was understood by the ancients. But this does not by any means imply that the Karaites could ever claim, or even attempted to claim, the honour of having been the only labourers in that field.

The alleged discovery of Ben Simchah, unless it shall be found spurious, or misunderstood, is clear enough to determine an historical fact of great importance in relation to the actual influence of Karaism in the subsequent study of Old Testament Scripture. But it is not undisputed.

A Russian Jew, Rabbi Simchah Pinsker, is author of a Hebrew book of extreme literary interest, being nothing less than 'An Introduction to the Babylonish-Hebrew Punctuation System' and editor of a grammar of the Hebrew Number, written by Aben Ezra.[1] On the history of vowel-pointing it sheds much light, but little or none on the subject now before us. Pinsker denies that this punctuation is Karaitic. He says that he lived among Karaites thirty-three years, read their manuscripts, both old and new, and found no peculiar punctuation in them. He further says that this peculiar system is sometimes found in Rabbanite books, as, for example, in the *Yad Kháazakah* of Maimonides, and in *Hapthtaroth* of the Rabbanite rite. All this may be true, and there seems to be no reason to dispute its truth, but there

[1] מבוא אל הנקוד האשורי או הבבלי וגו׳. The book has a German title:—Einleitung in das Babylonisch-Hebraische Punctationssystem nach den im Odessaer Museum der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Alterthümer befindlichen Handschriften (*unicis*) bearbeitet (mit Vokaltafel und einem Facsimile) nebst einer Grammatik der Hebräischen Zahlwörter (Jesod Mispar) von Abraham ben Ersa aus Handschriften herausgegeben und commentirt von S. Pinsker. Wien, 1863.

is no reason to imagine that the Karaites had ever a peculiar system of pointing, or, if they had, it would certainly have been retained. All that is affirmed is that the Karaites were the first, or certainly were among the first, who introduced vowel-points and accent-signs into Hebrew writing, and that, some years later than their beginning in Babylonia, an improved system, or one that its inventors considered such, was introduced at Tiberias, in Palestine, and in course of time, not all at once, superseded the first. The change was not simultaneous, neither was it extremely rapid. The oldest of the Karaite liturgies noticed on these pages retains some features of the Assyrian or Babylonian pointing, yet only enough to give the typography a slightly peculiar character. A single vestige, however, imports much in this inquiry.

Rabbanites and Karaites may well have agreed in accepting the aid of their fathers' industry. There is no question of exegesis that I am now aware of that is in any way affected by either one system or the other, but the promptness with which the Old Karaites devoted themselves to this *Nikkúd*, and their determination to abide by it while their less careful brethren read the text by the light of *Talmud*, shows their greater care for every *jot* and *tittle* of the Law, and may well persuade the Biblical student that he is indebted to the Karaites, as agents of a watchful providence, for leading the way in that care of the inspired books which was further taken by the Masoretes at a later period, and for which the Jews in general deserve our gratitude. This section of Karaite history will no doubt be enlarged hereafter by help of the manuscripts deposited in the Museum of Odessa and the Library of St. Petersburg, collated with other material that has hitherto attracted less attention than it will probably be found worthy to receive.

The recovery of manuscripts so singularly pointed awakens the most lively interest in learned Jews to whom it becomes known, and the Biblical scholars of Europe will surely bestir themselves in the careful collation of rolls containing the Old Testament.

Among the Karaite manuscripts deposited by Rabbi Abraham Firkowitsch in the Museum of Antiquities in Odessa, there are some pointed according to the earlier, or Babylonian system. Among them is a volume of the latter Prophets, written on 225 leaves of very good parchment in small folio, the points being written *over* the consonants, not *under* them as is now usual. The second column appears to contain a Targum. Between the two columns are some lesser Masoretic notes. The second column closes with the scribe's date and good wishes. He dates in the year (of contracts) 1228, and month of Tishri. It was therefore written in the time of Rabbi Saadiah, A.D. 916 or 917. Rabbi Simchah Pinskér publishes the fac-simile of the last page of the manuscript, or a part of it, which shall be reproduced here, referring Hebrew readers to the work itself,[1] which for the present purpose is invaluable. By comparison with the text as now printed in the Hebrew Bibles, and with the assistance of the few examples extracted from a very complete table in R. Pinskér's volume, the curious inquirer into the long-forgotten vowel-system of Babylonia possesses a sufficient key. Yet this 'Introduction' discloses enough to show that no small difficulty has been experienced in deciphering the faded codices, and also that the text of this and others of the collections have undergone considerable change, at least in regard to the orthography, and that the literary treasure now accumulated in Odessa and St. Petersburg has promised rich

[1] מבוא אל הנקוד האשורי או הבבלי. Wien, 1863.

reward to patient critics who will collate the manuscripts and contribute the result to confirm or to perfect the original text of the Old Testament. This is the celebrated manuscript known as *Pinner*, 3. Vestiges of this punctuation are visible in the early printed Karaite Liturgy, and the absence of the Elohim vowels from the sacred name יהוה is very remarkable.

The following is the text of Malachi iii. 22–24, as rendered by Pinskér, but comparison will show a considerable difference.

זָכְרוּ תוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ
בְּחֹרֵב אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים׃ הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי
שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֵת אֵלִיָּה הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה
הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא׃ וְהֵשִׁיב לֵב אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְלֵב
בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם פֶּן אָבוֹא וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם׃

The Babylonian system of punctuation included both vowels and accents, but it will be quite sufficient for our present purpose to assist the reader by exhibiting the vowels by means of a very few comparative examples, without detailing the accents also. By these examples, it is apparent that the system of the Babylonian pointers was more simple, although less complete than that of Tiberias, as adopted by the Masoretes, and that it very nearly resembles the Syriac vocalisation as it is now written. The elaborate introduction here quoted cannot now be reproduced, neither ought it to be abbreviated; and any student who bends his attention to the subject must go at once to Rabbi Simchah Pinsker.

For the convenience of general readers I subjoin the following key:—

Perfect and Imperfect Vowels, and Sheva Substitutes.

Khōlem בֹ, בוֹ=בֹ, בוֹ. Habac. i. 8. מֹרָחוֹק=מֹרָחוֹק.

Shūrek —, —, Habac. ii. 2. הַלְּחוֹת=הַלְּחוֹת. Habac. ii. 4. עֻפְּלָה=עֻפְּלָה. Hos. vii. 4. חֻמְצָתָם=חֻמְצָתָם.

Kámets —, —, Habac. i. 1. חָזָה=חָזָה. Ezek. xl. 42. גָּזִית=גָּזִית. Mal. i. 14. מָשְׁחָת=מָשְׁחָת.

Páthakh —, —, Mic. iv. 10. מִבָּבֶל=מִבָּבֶל. Habac. i. 1. הַמַּשָּׂא=הַמַּשָּׂא.

— — Habac i. 4. מַכְתִּיר=מַכְתִּיר.

Tsēré —, —, Habac. i. 6. מְקוֹם=מְקוֹם. Hos. x. 10. וְאֶאֱסְרֵם=וְאֶאֱסְרֵם. Hos. xi. 8. אֶמְגְּנֵךְ=אֶמְגְּנֵךְ.

Khīrik —, —, Habac. i. 15. יְגִילֵל=יְגִילֵל. Habac. ii. 12. מְקֻדָּם=מְקֻדָּם. Habac. ii. 1. מִשְׁמַרְתִּי=מִשְׁמַרְתִּי.

Segōl is doubtful. It appears once in the fac-simile, but seems out of place there.

Sheva is a line over the consonant רַ.

עֵדְוֹתַי וְחֻקָּתַי
מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי
אֹתוֹ בְּחֹרֵב אֶל כָּל יִשְׂ
יִשְׂרָאֵל חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים
חֲמִשָּׁה אַנְבִּי שֹׁלֵחַ לָכֶם אֶת
אֵלִיָּהוּ הַנָּבִיא לִפְנֵי בּוֹא
יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא
וְהֵשִׁיב לֵב אָבוֹת עַל
בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל אֲבוֹתָם
פֶּן אָבוֹא וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת
הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם׃

סוּם וְהַחֲדַפְתַּרְכַּחַרְשׁ
תַּשְׁרוּ בְּשָׁנַת אֶלֶף
וּשְׁתַּיִם וְעֶשְׂרִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה
שָׁנִים׃

סִימָן טוֹב יְהִי וְהַחֲדַפְתַּר
לְבַעֲלוֹ וּלְכָל הַקּוֹרֵא׃
וְחָמוּד וְחָגַרְתָּם בְּיָדִי׃

Facsimile from a Manuscript of the Tenth Century, at Odessa, with the Vowel Points usually called "Assyrian or Babylonian."

CHAPTER XI.

AHNAN AND THE REVIVAL OF KARAISM.

THE revival of Karaism—not its origin—is all that can be attributed to Ahnan.[1] 'He' enlightened the eyes of the Karaites,' as they themselves acknowledge. He was their enlightener, but not their founder. Evidences of their existence long before him have been already given, and we now observe how the way was gradually opëned for him to pursue his chosen coûrse.

The grammatical study of the sacred text of the Old Testament, whether diligently prosecuted on its own account, or urged by a natural reaction against the last and most exaggerated form of traditionary teaching, could not fail to produce a very marked effect. During the latter part of the sixth and all the seventh century, the Jewish mind was more and more agitated by religious questions, and the Hebrew unity became more and more palpably no better than a name. Murmurs of dissatisfaction were heard in the great schools of Babylonia. Nitronai, one of the Gaonim or highest masters in the famous school of Pumbeditha, bitterly complained that people were everywhere talking of heretics different—yet they were not *so* different—from all that had hitherto been heard of. Others, it was said, had made considerable innovation in

[1] The name is עָנָן, which the usual orthography *Anan* does not fully express as it is pronounced by an English reader. *Ahnan* throws back the accent on the first syllable, as required by the Hebrew ע.

matters of ceremony and ritual, innovating always for the worse; but these held fast by the very letter of the Law, just as they found it written, and regarded with undivided reverence the foundation-truths of the religion which was made known to Israel by Moses and the Prophets.

It was not to be imagined that the good would be unmixed with evil. There were men of ability, but, as in all times of religious excitement, there were also men of doubtful principles, to say the least of them. In Syria one Serini maintained that men should cast off utterly the yoke of the Talmud, and render entire obedience to all that is required in the written text of the inspired Hebrew scriptures. So far this was very good; but he pretended to be the deliverer of the people, and, as if he were the very Messiah whom the Prophets foretold, promised to gather them all home to the land of their fathers, and subdue the Arabs to their dominion. He hoisted a banner in the name of Liberty, and many thousands followed it. Not a few, induced to quit the lands of their dispersion, left their property behind them, and hastened away to Palestine after the Syrian Saviour! Some Sephardim left Spain, where they had lived in fair prosperity, vainly expecting to find boundless riches in a new Jerusalem. Serini died in 720. There have been many false Christs, but the circumstance of his advocating the literal interpretation of the Law serves to show that this cry was expected to be popular—that while the sufficiency of God's own word was acknowledged by learned men, their persuasion had become a doctrine—that it had gained on the mind of the commonalty, and was not first openly promulgated by Ahnan.

Rabbi Genaï, son of Baruch, is said to have been master of Ahnan about the year 730. He wrote a directory for synagogue services on sabbaths, festivals,

and fast-days, with appointment of lessons from the 'Five Books' and the Prophets, and the order of other parts of the service, all so skilfully arranged that he was called 'the second Ezra.' By the publication of this work Genaï settled many long-agitated questions, and it is said that Ahnan afterwards adopted it for the use of Karaite congregations. But before his name was known in public, others had attracted sufficient notice to be remembered in later times, and counted with the Karaite fathers. Such were Ephraim, Elisha, Enoch, Obadiah of Bazra on the Tigris, called *the Teacher*, who flourished in 750, and Judah the Persian about 755.[1]

Ahnan, son of David, is said by the Karaites to have been born in Beth-tsur, a town near Jerusalem, and was reputed to be of the lineage of King David. Some, not Karaites, speculate on this point, and endeavour to give the colour of probability to a conjecture of their own that would change Beth-tsur in Palestine into Bazra on the Tigris; and if this were proved, modern writers could more successfully represent his teaching as derived from a sect of Arabian or Persian dissenters from the Islam of Mohammid, called Mutazilites, and extremely like some sects or 'schools' of our own day. I could wish to be sure of Ahnan's birth-place, and cannot at present see reason to depart from the original statement of the Karaites themselves. According to that statement, he travelled from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem into Babylonia about the middle of the eighth century, spent several years there,[2] and became famous for explaining the Law of Moses, על דעת קבלת הקראים, *according to the doctrine of the tradition of the Karaites.* This was the traditional doctrine of the sufficiency of the Divine

[1] Prof. Dr. Julius Fürst, *Geschichte des Karaerthums*, abschnitt i. 26–30.

[2] About 740, or from that to 743.

Law, without human traditions, which came down from Ben Tabbaï to Shammaï, and from Shammaï to their own day. Those elder Karaites even professed to have in their possession an exact and attested *transcript* of the sacred code.[1]

There is a story that his uncle was Exilarch, or head of the Captivity in Babylonia, but died childless; and that the dignity would have fallen upon him, if the Jewish Elders had not refused to confirm that presumed right by an election, on account of his opposition to the Talmud, in accordance with which they wished the government to be conducted. It may have been so, but while the Karaites do not affirm it we must suspend belief. If his zeal in maintaining the sufficiency of Holy Scripture was prompted by disappointment, that circumstance might diminish our confidence in his sincerity, but would not impair the force of a single good argument, even from his lips. A good cause may have an interested advocate, and be a good cause after all.

But it does not appear that Ahnan was in any respect an unworthy advocate of his own established principles. The author of the book חלוק, *Schism*, defends his memory against many charges which he declares to have been false. R. Japhet, the Karaite, maintains that he was a diligent and faithful instructor of the people, to whom he explained difficult passages of Holy Scripture, but met with great opposition—opposition so fierce, that his life was often in peril, in the time of the Mohammedan Abú Zaáfar, which is supposed to be the same as the Khalif Al Mansur. R. Japhet mentions the report that he was entitled to the exilarchate, but does not confirm it

[1] Perhaps Aben Ezra refers to the Karaites in his note on Deut. xxv. 5, under the title of מעתיקים, *teachers of the* עתקה TRANSCRIPT, where he quotes a sentence of theirs in support of a literal interpretation of the word 'brethren' in that place.

by any direct evidence. He affirms that, being a powerful debater, he silenced in argument some Jews of the house of Hillel, he being of the house of Shammaï, and says that none who followed that way could stand before him. R. Mordechai says that they tried to kill him, as their successors have also sometimes tried to put antagonists out of the way; 'but,' says the Karaite, 'God kept our prince safe out of their hands, and would not give him up to them.' The same authority goes on to say that, 'He made a multitude of converts, whom he instructed more fully in the truth, with great diligence, and led them in the fear of God. By his means the Scriptural Doctrines gained fresh acceptance, and were propagated with unexampled vigour and success. Thus the revival spread from Bagdad to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem into all the surrounding countries. 'Soön,' adds R. Japhet, 'there was no part of the world where Karaites were not to be found, as well as Jews and Rabbanites.'

Here let us digress for a few moments, to notice a position taken by Professor Fürst, which vitiates, as I believe, an otherwise most valuable work, a work that for arrangement and compilation of original materials, executed at cost of immense labour, exceeds all books of its kind in relation to Karaism that have yet been published; and for the facts it contains, and its copious reference to original documents, is essentially necessary to every student of this branch of history. He writes thus:—

'But the rise of Karaism was an inevitable surrender to the circumstances which we have laid before the reader in the introductory section of this history, as it also was a necessity for the Rabbanite portion of the Jews. The law was regulated in conformity with the so-called traditions. Dogmas that had been received as established

doctrines were now required to be believed as laws without any proof, and to comprehend, to explain, to have light let in upon the mind, became absolutely hopeless, when no man might dare to contradict or doubt. The law petrified by its excessive burden the very soul of Judaism, which seemed to lose itself in a sort of scholasticism; and in the high schools the written law was by this time almost abandoned. The opposition and revolt against such a quenching of the life of Judaism that from time to time was manifest, from the rise of Sadduceeism down to the days of Ahnan, the combined hostility of the Sadducees, the overwhelming influence of Masoretes, grammarians, poets, and physicians, and the wild reformers Serini and Abu Isa, were now the united percursors of the contradiction which had been accumulating for a thousand years, but as yet had not had sufficient power to work out a thorough schism, and thereby force Judaism, bounden by faith in its traditions, into a second birth, and a refreshing reformation. In the time of Ahnan and his numerous companions such a schism was first possible; and Ahnan, as head of Karaism and living expression of the spirit of his time, is the next object of our statement.'

Thus speaks Fürst.[1] He represents Karaism as a revival of Sadduceeism, a mere intellectual revolt against the burden of a contrary system, an irrepressible and natural disgust at the compulsory admission of a superstition, or a priestly despotism, which forbade inquiry, and punished contradiction or even doubt. Certainly such a revolt at any time could easily be accounted for, and forgiven, perhaps justified; but to say that Masoretes and grammarians were in accord with Sadducees is to affirm more than is proveable by fact, as the facts noted

[1] *Geschichte*, ii. 1.

in the last chapter fully show. Even more remarkable is the aberration from historic truth which represents the system of Karaism as suggested to Ahnan by an Arabian sect of unbelievers in the resurrection, and by Sadduçean deniers of the existence of angels and spirits. That is roundly stated by Fürst in the next chapter.[1] But they who have held fast for ages by the confession of faith still contained in their Liturgies, and which the reader will find in a succeeding chapter,—they who believe 'that God, blessed be His Name, will raise the sons of men to life in the day of judgment;' and 'that the blessed God giveth to man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings,'—those confessors could not have derived their faith from such a fountain, nor would they set at the head and beginning of their memorial-prayers the name of a man who taught their fathers the very opposite, as the Rabbanite antagonists of their faith would have us to believe. In truth, Rabbanite and Karaite equally agree with the old Pharisees, and with that eminent Pharisee especially who once appealed to a Jewish king in such words as these:—'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?'[2]

The hypothesis which reduces Karaism to the level of a local sect, and then seeks to account for the sudden spread of so great an innovation from so remote a centre

[1] Als Wazil zu allerest um 740 das System der Mutazila, d. h., der heterodoxen Religionsphilosophie, zu Bazra begründete, ohne dass damals die Griechischen Philosophen übersetzt vorhanden waren und überhaupt fremde Einflüsse mitgewirkt haben konnten, mag Anan einigen Antheil daran gehabt haben, da dieses System aus dem Sadukäerthume ihm bekannt gewesen sein muss. Jedenfalls hat er mit den jüdischen Genossen zu Bazra, das auch Geburtsort der Karäischen Väter Obadia und Noach war, dieses mutazilitische System auf die Dogmatik des Judenthums angewandt, wie wir weiterhin sehen werden. *Ut supra*, 2.

[2] Acts xxvi. 8.

and such obscure parentage, is irreconcilable with history, and plunges those who adopt it into a depth of difficulty. We take a plainer course by endeavouring to trace back the subject of our investigation to its natural source, irrespective of all theories, and preferring the concurrent testimonies of Karaite writers to the conjectures of strangers and the accusations of enemies.

The description given of Ahnan by those who must have known him best is not that of a man who laboured merely to cast off a galling yoke. He not only taught the truth, as it is opposed to manifest error, but it is said of him that he led his converts in the fear of God, and the last quoted statement of R. Japhet, that Karaites were to be found wherever there were Jews and Rabbanites, conveys the idea that the Jews in general were not their opponents, and that the Rabbanites were but a sect of Jews, probably successors of the proud Pharisees who, seven hundred years before, thought themselves so much better than other men. It also indicates that Rabbanites and Karaites were found in cities in smaller or larger numbers, but that the mass of persons who frequented synagogues were content to pass as plain Jews, and were everywhere the most numerous. The Karaites honoured the man who had been the chief promoter of such a great revival of their ancient faith.

A sentence attributed to him has been often quoted by Christian writers, and ought to be repeated here. 'The lovers of the truth should know that Jesus the Nazarene was a great teacher, a just and good man, one who feared God, and who taught nothing as a statute or judgment except the written Law of God, setting aside all that shall be proved diverse or contrary to whatsoever Moses —on whom be peace—wrote in the Law.'[1] This does

[1] ולדעת אוהבי האמת ישו הנוצרי חכם גדול היה איש צדיק וחסיד

not imply any acknowledgment of Messiahship or Divinity in our Lord Jesus Christ, nor show that Ahnan regarded him as a being of superior order to himself, nor even as equal to Moses. He does no more than declare that Jesus of Nazareth scrupulously avoided any alteration of the Mosaic Law, that he was a thoroughly submissive Jew, who could not have established anything different from the Law of Moses, much less contrary thereto.

Very little is known of his history, and, as yet, no sufficient analysis has been made of the fragments of his writings which are to be found in later works. Much that is written concerning him is unworthy of credit. The fables of Arabs and the calumnies of some Rabbanites are more fitly passed over in silence than repeated. It appears certain that he returned to Palestine, resided in Jerusalem, and was very active there. He built a synagogue or formed a congregation, but as Jerusalem is reputed to have been for some generations the chief seat of Karaism, one synagogue could scarcely have been sufficient. Remains are found of two works of his, a *Book of Precepts* ספר מצוות, and a commentary on the Five Books of Moses. It is said that he followed the thirteen rules of interpretation generally received in Jewish schools, that his style of language was strongly Aramaic, and that his method resembled that of the masters of the high schools. The doctrine, however, was Karaite without compromise. The year 761 is given as the date of his arrival in Jerusalem, accompanied with a host of disciples whose presence kindled great enthusiasm in a multitude of Jews who flung away the fetters of Talmudism. From this busy centre were sent forth letters of admonition, instruction, and encouragement to distant congregations, with zealous

יראּ אלהים ולא הורה שום חק ומשפט זולת תורת האלהים הכתובה כל שכן שיגזור חפך או סותר ממה שכתב מושה ע"ה בתורה:
Wolfius, *Bibl. Hebræa*, iv. p. 1086.

preachers who proclaimed every where the supreme authority of the Law, and the worthlessness of all that, in the Talmud or any other writings, was contrary to the Law of Moses.[1]

Ahnan died, they say, in the year 765, in Jerusalem.

It is not possible to estimate the extent of his influence, or the number of Karaites in the world either before or after the revival of which he took the lead. The strength of the Bible-reading section of the Jewish population has been undervalued, but, as the author of the *Sepher Hillûk* well observes, a good cause is not to be despised on account of the small number of its adherents, or their lack of wealth and power. It would be strange if their enemies did not taunt them for their comparative poverty in later times, when they were brought low by persecution, and boast of their own superior wealth and greater number of disciples. To such boastings they were accustomed to reply that the soundness or unsoundness of a principle, or the truth or falseness of doctrine, cannot be ascertained by the application of a money-test. They quoted the divine injunction: 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil, neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to arrest judgment.'[2] They comforted one another with the assurance given by Moses to their Fathers; 'The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers.'[3]

No doubt they were diminished, numerically, in the later times, but that decrease, as I venture to believe, has been more than compensated by the growth of their principle among the best classes of Jews, even those who make no profession of adherence to their communion.

[1] Pinskér, לקותי קדמוניות, appendix 33 and 90.
[2] Exod. xxii. 7.
[3] Deut. vii. 7, 8.

But that principle of severe conformity to law is never popular, certainly not among the majority of those who 'profess and call themselves Christians.' Their simple method of interpreting the Law does not admit of the latitude allowed by traditionary casuists. Those men no longer sat in Moses' seat. They were now installed in the chairs of their later 'fathers,' and in self-assumed authority laid a heavy burden upon others, but would not submit to carry any part of it. The Karaites, on the contrary, were noted for self-denial, of which they gave signal evidence in many ways, and especially by their superior strictness in respect to the marriage law, which they always received in the severer sense. The Eastern Jews were polygamists, after the manner of their Gentile neighbours, and as their fathers had been, but the Karaite husbands more happily submitted to the restraint of monogamy, as indeed all husbands did submit at the beginning.' Ahnan, by following the older Karaites in an extremely rigid interpretation of Leviticus xviii. 6, and the Karaites of his day, by agreeing in the same interpretation, made it often difficult for a man to find a woman to whom he might propose marriage, there being none that was not in some way *near of kin*. The Karaites, too, had to endure a double persecution,—first, from the outer world, and then from their brethren of the hostile synagogue, which was far more grievous, and made their condition more than doubly hard.

But after all, it turned out that the computations were false. One of themselves, R. Beshitzi, a devout young man, set out on a wide pilgrimage to ascertain the condition of his brethren; for, in the middle ages, trustworthy intelligence could hardly be obtained without direct personal inquiry. However, the Children of Jacob, like their wandering ancestor, have always delighted in travel, and Beshitzi, like a true Hebrew, spent the vigour of his early

manhood in exploring the Holy Land, Assyria, Chaldæa, Arabia, and Turkey. On return, he reported that his brethren in the Scriptural faith were multiplied like the sands of the sea and the stars of heaven. Allowing for the latitude of poetic metaphor, and for the lovely language of enthusiasm, which colder natures are unable to comprehend, we find his report confirmed by information from other sources. We also learn that they used vernacular languages for the promotion of learning, and had many books of their own in Arabic, written by their own scribes, and very ancient. When Mohammed took Mecca, he found it inhabited by Sabians and Karaites, who lived apart in the same city. They were not separated by hatred, but according to the custom prevailing in the East, and most carefully observed by all Jews, they were bound to live in absolute separation from strangers and worshippers of strange gods.

Beshitzi mentions[1] a note of Aben Ezra on Daniel xi. 31, where the commentator attributes to the wise men of the *Sadokim* (Sadducees, not Karaites) a fanciful interpretation of the passage, to the effect that there was a sanctuary in Mecca where the Israelites kept their feast. I find such a note in that place from the pen of Aben Ezra, and there can be no doubt that when he *writes* of the Israelites in Mecca, he *thinks* of the Karaites, although he does not mention them, for in the same note, quoting with disapproval an opinion of R. Saadiah, the eminent Rector of Sora, much indebted to Karaism for manuduction into the method of explaining Scripture for which he became so eminent, yet an opponent of the system, he observes ironically, 'this is very nearly דרש (the way of the Rabbanites); 'certainly it is not פשט,' (the simple method of the Karaites). This allusion might be suggested, not by the quotation he criticises, but by the fact of history he has just quoted,—the

presence of Karaites in Mecca,—or it may have arisen from the recollection of Ben Yerukhim, his own Karaite master.

Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela was also a far traveller in search of Hebrew brethren, but he was a 'Son of the Talmud.' His Itinerary, being both printed and translated,[1] is better known than that of Beshitzi. Benjamin makes mention of Karaites in but few places. He notes that 'in Constantinople he found about 2,000 Rabbanites,' —by which name he distinctly calls them,—'and some 500 Karaites living apart. Between these and the Rabbanites, who are disciples of the wise, there is a wall of separation.' At Ascalon they told him there were about 200 Rabbanite Jews, with two Rabbis at their head, whose names he gives, and about 40 Karaites. At Damascus about 3,000 Israelites, some of them learned and rich, and out of those 3,000 about 200 were Karaites.

These, however, were but glimpses taken at hasty sight, and perhaps involuntarily. The numbers given are altogether too round to serve us for any calculation, and it is incredible that there should have been any considerable place with no Karaites at all. The Rabbi might surely have found some few, at least, in every place he visited. He might even have noted some Jewish settlements occupied by them alone, but he notices them in these few only,

[1] R. Benjamini Itinerarium. Lugd. Batav. 1633. I strongly suspect that the number of Karaites is always set down as low as R. Benjamin or his informants could make it. It seems to have been too low at Damascus, a chief seat of Karaism. Traditionism, at least, suffered a severe blow at Damascus soon after the crucifixion, when the conversion of many Jews to faith in Christ alarmed the Sanhedrim. Karaites of the first race, or, as they would once have said, men of the house of Tabbaï, were probably numerous there, and we are persuaded that those Jews have always been the most forward to receive the Gospel. This, however, is no more than a suggestion to any student of the relative histories of Constantinople and Damascus in relation to the state of Judaism and Christianity in those cities at the time of R. Benjamin's visit.

and it does not seem that he cared much to see them anywhere. He barely mentions them, at best, just as he does the Samaritans, uniformly passing by the Heads of their Synagogues and other important persons, whom he leaves in blank silence, as if none such existed. We observe what he is pleased to mention, and feel the while that, as respects Karaites, there is more of concealment than discovery. It is remarkable that although he visited Egypt, where we know there were multitudes, he does not mention them at all. We also know that they were very numerous in Jerusalem, their old metropolis, but he does not notice them; and, perhaps on that very account, lest he should divulge the comparative weakness of his own party, he makes no allusion to synagogue nor sect, and passes over names and numbers as if his attention had been chiefly occupied in a topographical survey of the city.

With regard to the succession of Chief Rabbis or Patriarchs, a correct list has yet to be compiled, unless one of these two may be accepted as such, so far as it goes. The first is said by Beshitzi to have been found at Cairo, in an ancient manuscript written on fish-skin :—

1. Ahnan, son of David.
2. Saul, son of Ahnan the Prince.
3. Josiah (Joshua?) son of Saul the Prince.
4. Benjamin Ondi.
5. Samuel Komtsi.
6. Isaac Botseri.
7. David Mekamatz, a Proselyte of Righteousness.
8. Noah.
9. Solomon, son of Yerukhim.
10. Joseph, son of Noah, with Jacob Yitzhaki Kirkasani the son; Khaser, son of Mashiakh, and Abraham, son of Isaac Saboscri.

The other list, compiled by Fürst from his documents,

differs widely, and the dates are palpably conjectural. It contains twelve names, the former six being those of Jerusalem patriarchs, and the latter six of Cairo. It stands thus, to challenge criticism:—

1. Ahnan	A.D. 760	Jerusalem.
2. Saul	„ 780	
3. Joshua	„ 810	
4. Jehoshaphat	„ 830	
5. Boaz	„ 850	
6. David	„ 880	
7. Saadiah	„ 910	Cairo.
8. Solomon	„ 950	
9. Hezekiah	„ 990	
10. Chasdai	„ 1030	
11. David	„ 1070	
12. Solomon	„ 1110	

There are other attempts to frame lists, but no authentic list is yet forthcoming, and it becomes evident, after a moment's reflection, that no one man could ever have superintended the affairs of the whole Karaite dispersion. If there were no duties of administration belonging to the office, and if it were only honorary, the common agreement necessary as to the person most eligible to the dignity could not be possible when no man knew where all the Karaites were to be found, and communication between them all was impossible. The lists, therefore, may safely be dismissed as fabulous, or laid aside until more information is obtained.

Whatever might have been the nature of their office, and the extent of their spiritual jurisdiction, it is certain that the Patriarchs were not regarded with any servile veneration. The Karaites do not acknowledge any man as their founder, for founder they had none. They do not swear by any master, not even by the most famous of them, Ahnan himself. They do indeed make honourable

mention of many of them in the *Zikronoth* or memorial-prayers which are read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day, and the name of Ahnan they place first, seven companies of eminent personages following after. His memorial is in the words following:—'May our God, and the God of our fathers, have compassion on our dead, and on your dead, and on the whole dead of all his people, the House of Israel, chiefly and before all, on our Rabbi Ahnan the Prince, a man of God, head of the captivity, who opened the way of the Law, and enlightened the eyes of the Sons of the Reading, and converted many from iniquity and from transgression, and guided us in the right way. May the God of Israel make him to lodge in a good resting-place; in a pleasant resting-place may he have his dwelling with the seven companies of righteous men who are waiting in the Garden of Eden, and may there be fulfilled on him the Scripture that is written:—"And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse that shall stand for an ensign to the nations, to him shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." (Is. xi. 10.) "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of Heaven shall He thunder upon them; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth, and He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His anointed." (1 Sam. ii. 10.) "His enemies will I clothe with shame, but upon himself shall his crown flourish." (Ps. cxxxii. 18.) And yet may God fulfil on him the Scripture that is written:—"And thou, go thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. xii. 13.)'[1]

I reserve to the next chapter some observations on this extraordinary prayer.

Whatever may have been imagined to the contrary, I

[1] The זכרונות in סדר תפלות הקראים--חלק ראשון. Wien, 1854.

do not find that they ever assumed the name of Ahnanites, neither does it appear that they were ashamed to bear it when it was imposed upon them in contempt or thoughtlessness. But notwithstanding the exorbitant honour paid to him in the above prayer, where they extol him as raised above seven companies of the blessed, they have borne noble testimony against servility, and often proved their sincerity by openly differing from the man whose memory 'chiefly and before all' they delight to honour.[1] This independence of judgment leaves them all free to change,—to change for the better, we must hope, or it may be for the worse. Yet it weakens their unity, and helps to account for a numerical decrease, which could not but follow by frequent secessions from their synagogues. After all, if we may trust report, they are not more disunited than other Jews, among whom, at least in Europe, perfect unanimity seems to be no more expected. Moses, not Ahnan, is their prophet, and while they keep to this point it will be to them a centre of moral unity. In any conceivable event, the whole body of Judaism would be benefited by the adoption of the same principle, and in relation to the Christian world, by the discussion of vital truth on the one ground that can be universally recognised.

[1] R. Mordecai, chap. iii.

CHAPTER XII.

DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINE.

TRIGLAND thought that the Rabbanites, being always by far the stronger party, exaggerated the differences which the Karaites, as the weaker, were always disposed to make less of, and were anxious to magnify the points of agreement between themselves and their 'dear brethren on the upper hand.' So it may have been. Rabbi Caleb, in the preface to his *Ten Articles*, עשרה מאמרות, says that there was not in his day the same difference as there once had been 'between them and their brethren the Rabbanites concerning the constitutions, cautions, limitations, and traditions which they had received from their holy fathers, except with respect to those things about which there is no direction in the written Law.' In other words, the Karaites did not so absolutely refuse to have any regard to the traditionary interpretations of the Law, as did their fathers in the days of Ahnan, but availed themselves of the labours of those Talmudists who by fair investigation had thrown any clearer light on difficult passages of the sacred text. But this did not imply any concession of the principle. The sternest Puritan may avail himself of the erudite labours of a Benedictine scholar without surrendering a particle of his horror of priest and prelate. When a master of Kabbala faithfully studies the inspired Scripture, a son of the Reading will accept the produce of his labour, and register the homage he has rendered.

Perhaps other two men could not have been found more competent to represent their respective parties than Rabbi Saadiah, the Gaon or chief master of the High School of Sora, and Rabbi Solomon ben Yerukhim, the most eminent Karaite of his day. Saadiah was born in Fayúm, in Egypt, in the year 892, and was thence called Fayúmi. He was an early student, and rapidly attained proficiency in varied studies—Hebrew, Arabic, Talmudic, and philosophic. Besides these general pursuits, he gave attention to the Karaite controversy; and if, as is said, he was at one time under the instruction of Ben Yerukhim, he could hardly have done otherwise; but, as the Karaite was only seven years older than himself, the tradition may seem rather doubtful. They might, however, have sustained the relation of senior and junior fellow-student. Saadiah is reputed to have been the first eminent Rabbanite who made the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament the subject of earnest textual study, translating the Hebrew into Arabic, and writing thereupon Arabic Scholia and an Arabic Commentary; whereas hitherto the whole body of tradition-loving Rabbis had quite abandoned that fruitful field of study to the Karaites. He so far profited by his Karaite readings as to addict himself to a literal and historical method of exposition. But it is said that he went far astray from pure Karaism in explaining away, rationalistically, all that relates to the Divine attributes, angels, and miracles.[1] Still he professed himself a Talmudist, and cordially agreed with the Talmudists in denying the

[1] I have not received this unfavourable impression of R. Saadiah. But as I have not made very frequent reference to his commentaries, and therefore may not have happened on passages that would justify the censure of explaining away the meaning of important portions of the text, I can only at present abstain from further observation on the subject. Be that as it may, I have been sometimes indebted to this Gaon for very valuable information and suggestions.

sufficiency of the canonical scriptures, if studied without the keys which he believed tradition had supplied.

Rabbi Solomon ben Yerukhim, also an Egyptian, was born in Fastat, or old Misr, in 885, and early instructed in the Karaite faith, the Hebrew and Arabic languages, and both Talmuds. The writings of Ahnan were his chief authority in Karaism. He completed his thirteenth year exactly on the sabbath *Yithro*[1] in the year 898, when he brought a copy of the Decalogue into the synagogue of Fastat, and was called up to read. In the year 905, when he had scarcely reached manhood, he went to Jerusalem, where he dwelt all the rest of his life, except when on journeys to Egypt or to the East for the sake of visiting Karaite synagogues, holding disputations with Rabbanites, and otherwise labouring in the same cause. He said that in Jerusalem all the pious men were congregated from east and west, and all wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures had its home. There he lived amongst the learned of his own brotherhood, ever teaching others and increasing his own knowledge. There he heard of the rising influence of Saadiah, read his controversial tracts as they were issued, and in the year 923 hastened to Egypt, where Saadiah was judge in the synagogue of his native city Fayúm, being then in the flower of manhood, and rejoicing in high repute for extensive learning and eloquence. It was probably then that those two eminent men conferred on the questions which divided themselves and their brethren, and laid down, with all possible distinctness, the terms of the great controversy. The conference was reported, in summary, by Ben Yerukhim or one of his friends.

Saadiah gave seven reasons why he should not reject the Talmud, and Ben Yerukhim replied to each

[1] When the Lesson וישמע יתרו, Exod. xviii. 1 was read.

reason in order. The state of the question is thus exhibited:—

I. *Saadiah* alleges that the language of the written Law of Moses is often so general that, if specific directions were not given by an Oral Law, the written commandment could not be kept, and brings two examples. *First*—For the fringes to be attached to the corners of the garments, there is not any direction given as to how, or in what form, or of what size they shall be made. *Second*—The written Law does not prescribe the structure of the tabernacles to be erected on the Feast of Tabernacles.

1. *Ben Yerukhim* replies that therefore no special directions ought to be given on such cases, the Law being silent.

II. *Saadiah.* Neither is the quantity of the offering (תרומה) fixed by the Law.

2. *Ben Yerukhim.* Therefore whosoever gives as liberally as he can satisfies the Law.

III. *Saadiah.* No one knows how to count the seventh day from the creation, nor could any one tell when the Sabbath ought to fall, the Law being silent on that matter.

3. *Ben Yerukhim.* Every person in every place well knows that already.

IV. *Saadiah.* By tradition only is known what vessels are susceptible of pollution.

4. *Ben Yerukhim.* Read attentively the words of the Law in Levit. xi. 32–33, and you will see clearly that every implement is included under that description wherewith work may be done.

V. *Saadiah.* We are bound to offer prayers, yet the Law does not say what prayers nor how many.

5. *Ben Yerukhim.* Then compare the command, even where it is given in the most general terms (as in Jer.

xxix. 12), with the examples of prayer that you will find —with such prayers, for instance, as are recorded in the Book of Daniel—and you will learn all you wish to know.

VI. *Saadiah.* We need tradition to tell us how many years ago the second Temple was destroyed.

6. *Ben Yerukhim.* I wish you would tell me in what sacred book I may learn that it is my duty to know this, or what good the knowing it would do me.

VII. *Saadiah.* We ought to know this that we may glory in the knowledge of the end of our captivity, and of the resurrection of the dead, when that shall be accomplished.

7. *Ben Yerukhim.* In the songs of the Prophets, and of all the seers, in all these are they recorded; by these the knowledge of them is preserved, and we have no need of thy words, nor of thy wisdom.

In perfect accordance with this last answer are the words of our Lord: 'These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.' (Luke xxiv. 44.) So is the concluding sentence of St. Peter's proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles: 'To Him give all the Prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.' (Acts x. 43.)

Now Shalmon ben Yerukhim presses his cause.

1. He insists on the truth of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, as acknowledged by all Jews, wherever dispersed throughout the world. He appeals for confirmation to the mighty miracles, whereby the writings of Moses and the Prophets are commended to universal belief. He unites with his own plea for the

supreme authority of the written Word, the confession of those that are without; Mussulmans, to wit, and especially Christians. The Oral Law, as it is called, has no such evidences; but, before accepting the traditions of this pretended law, the Jew has to ask who the men were whose names are supposed to give authority to the traditions. Whoever they may be, the authority of the Talmud can only be human at the best, and the *thus saith the Lord* cannot be prefixed to any portion of that ponderous miscellany which, in this essential respect, differs from the Law and the Prophets. All that can be pretended in its behalf is that thus said this Rabbi, or thus said that, or that other doctor thus delivereth. But all these Rabbis and Doctors are later than Ezra, and later than Malachi, 'the seal of prophecy.' They were all men like ourselves, and nothing more; all belonging to the time when the Holy Spirit said the Jew is 'no longer with us.'

2. He contends that the style of the Talmud is on a level with its authorship. He asks what it is but the talk of novices. Of these novices, he says, there are six orders—alluding to the six *Sedarim* of the Mishnah—the members of each order incessantly contradicting one another, utterly unlike Moses and the Prophets who never disagree. These make it their business ever to dispute. What one affirms the other formally denies. What one permits the other peremptorily prohibits. One blesses what the other curses, and curses most solemnly, swearing by his head. But all this is utterly different from the modesty and majesty of God's truth.

And we might also add that it is utterly different from the simplicity and meekness of Him, concerning whom a Prophet said, 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall

He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench, until he bring forth judgment with truth.' (Isaiah xlii. 3, 4.)

3. *Ben Yerukhim* proceeds to show that the contents of the Talmud are no better than the style and spirit. This he demonstrates by examples, so far, at least, as some parts of the Talmud are concerned. Some of the passages quoted are absurd, some are obscene, some are blasphemous. They need not be transcribed into this page.

The time, we may believe, is now past when any one will venture to affirm, with Father Simon of the Oratory, that while the Sadducees and Samaritans rejected the traditions, the Karaites thought very highly of them. This was a great mistake, and can only have arisen from a misapprehension of what has been already observed, that these advocates of the sole authority of Divine Revelation were not so blinded by their zeal as to reject the fruit of any man's honest labour, and if a Talmudist could offer any real aid for investigating the sense of the Holy Scripture of the Old Testament, they gladly accepted it. Nor was there any reason why they should not. Great as was the difference, so great as to rend the Jews into two hostile sects, it did not imply that, antecedently to Christianity, or irrespective of it, there was any schism between them on a single fundamental truth. Samaritans, of course, are not to be included under this statement, for they were not Jews, nor had they any dealing with them. With regard to Christianity, a few discriminative observations may be offered further on, but we must first examine the Articles of Faith professed, respectively, by the Jews in general, and by the Karaites in particular, setting down first the *Thirteen Articles* of the Common Creed, and then the *Ten* of the Scripturist. The *Thirteen*, as I find them in an edition

of the Liturgy of the Sephardim used in England, read thus [1]:—

1. The Living God shall be exalted and praised: He is, and there is no period to His existence.

2. He is One, and there is no unity like His unity: He is invisible, and yet there is no bound to His one existence: He has no corporeal resemblance, nor has He a body: we cannot express to Him His holiness.

3. He is before every created thing: He is the First, and there is no beginning to His beginning.

4. Behold him Lord Eternal of the whole creation: Displaying His majesty and His dominion.

5. The abundance of prophecy is His gift: To the men of His own treasure, and His glory.

6. There hath not arisen in Israel one like Moses yet: Nor a prophet that looketh upon His likeness.

7. A law of truth God gave to His people: By the hand of His prophet, faithful in His house.

א יִגְדַּל אֱלֹהִים חַי וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח· נִמְצָא וְאֵין עֵת אֶל מְצִיאוּתוֹ׃
ב אֶחָד וְאֵין יָחִיד בְּיִחוּדוֹ· נֶעְלָם וְגַם אֵין סוֹף לְאַחְדוּתוֹ׃
אֵין לוֹ דְּמוּת הַגּוּף· וְאֵינוֹ גּוּף· לֹא נַעֲרוֹךְ אֵלָיו קְדוּשָּׁתוֹ׃
ג קַדְמוֹן לְכָל דָּבָר אֲשֶׁר נִבְרָא· רִאשׁוֹן וְאֵין רֵאשִׁית לְרֵאשִׁיתוֹ׃
ד הִנּוֹ אֲדוֹן עוֹלָם לְכָל נוֹצָר· יוֹרֶה גְּדוּלָּתוֹ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ׃
ה שֶׁפַע נְבוּאָתוֹ נָתַנּוֹ· אֶל אַנְשֵׁי סְגוּלָּתוֹ וְתִפְאַרְתּוֹ׃
ו לֹא קָם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה עוֹד· נָבִיא וּמַבִּיט אֶל תְּמוּנָתוֹ׃
ז תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת נָתַן לְעַמּוֹ אֵל· עַל יַד נְבִיאוֹ נֶאֱמַן בֵּיתוֹ׃
ח לֹא יַחֲלִיף הָאֵל וְלֹא יָמִיר· דָּתוֹ לְעוֹלָמִים לְזוּלָתוֹ׃
ט צוֹפֶה וְיוֹדֵעַ סְתָרֵינוּ· מַבִּיט לְסוֹף דָּבָר בְּקַדְמוּתוֹ׃
י גּוֹמֵל לְאִישׁ חָסִיד כְּמִפְעָלוֹ· נוֹתֵן לָרָשָׁע רָע כְּרִשְׁעָתוֹ׃
יא יִשְׁלַח לְקֵץ יָמִים מְשִׁיחֵנוּ· לִפְדוֹת מְחַכֵּי קֵץ יְשׁוּעָתוֹ׃
יב מֵתִים יְחַיֶּה אֵל בְּרוֹב חַסְדּוֹ· בָּרוּךְ עֲדֵי עַד שֵׁם תְּהִלָּתוֹ׃
יג אֵלֶּה שְׁלֹשׁ עֶשְׂרֵה לְעִקָּרִים· הִנָּם יְסוֹד דַּת אֵל וְתוֹרָתוֹ׃

8. God will not change, nor will He alter: His decree is for all ages, for Himself alone.

9. He spieth out and knoweth our secrets: He foresaw the matter to the end in His eternity.

10. He recompenseth the good man according to his works: Giving to the wicked evil according to his wickedness.

11. He will send our Messiah at the end of days: To redeem them that expect the end of His salvation.

12. God will revive the dead in the abundance of His goodness: Blessed for ever and ever be the name of His praise.

13. These thirteen are to be as roots: The decree of God and His Law.

The *Ten* fundamental Articles of the Karaites, I find in their own Liturgy,[1] and translate as follows:—

1. That all this bodily (or material) existence, that is to say, the spheres and all that is in them, are created.

2. That they have a Creator, and the Creator has His own soul (or spirit).

3. That He has no similitude, and He is one, separate from all.

4. That He sent Moses, our Master, upon whom be peace.

5. That He sent with Moses, our Master, His Law, which is perfect.

6. For the instruction of the faithful, the language of our Law, and the interpretation, that is to say, the Reading (or Text), and the division (or vowel-pointing).

[1] א שכל זה המציאות הנשמי ר'ל הגלגלים וכל אשר בהם נבראו:
ב שיש להם בורא ולברא נפשו:
ג שאין לו דמות והוא אחד מכל צד:
ד כי הוא שלח מושה רבינו ע'ה':
ה כי הוא שלח עם מושה רבינו תורתו התמימה:
ו לדעת המאמנים לשון תורתנו ופירשה ר'ל המקרא והפירוש:
ז שהשם ית' נבא שאר הנביאים:
ח שהשם ית' שמו יחי בני אדם ביום הדין:
ט שהשם ית' נותן לאיש כדרכיו וכפרי מעלליו:
י שהשם ית' לא מאס לאנשי הגלות אמנם הם תחת יסורי השם וראוי להם בכל יום לקנות ישועתו על ידי משיח בן דור:

7. That the Blessed God sent forth the other prophets.

8. That God,—blessed be His name,—will raise the sons of men to life in the Day of Judgment.

9. That the Blessed God giveth to man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

10. That the Blessed God has not reprobated the men of the captivity, but they are under the chastisements of God, and it is every day right that they should obtain His salvation by the hands of Messiah, the Son of David.

We may now compare these two confessions. The former is full and clear; there is much verbal diversity in its form in the various editions, but it will be acknowledged that the one now before the reader is very beautiful as a piece of Hebrew composition. The latter is not to be regarded as a perfect creed, but a confession of Karaism. While the former, as a summary of Jewish faith, has the merit of completeness, it is unquestionably composed with the view of conveying, in every synagogue, a direct protest against Christianity, which the eighth Article is intended to condemn, as if God were *changed* in the Incarnation, or *altered* in the Gospel. The sixth and eleventh Articles, if true, would annihilate the New Testament.

The latter document does not contain any such Antichristian protest, and the tenth Article, read hastily, might even seem to have been framed for the purpose of leaving a way open at any time for an express acceptance of the Saviour. But in reality, the Karaite creed harmonises with the other, and differing only in so far as was thought necessary for the profession of the distinctive principles of Karaism.

Rabbi Japhet the Levite, master of R. Abraham ben Ezra, quoted by Trigland, collects notes of Karaite commentators on the Ten Articles. They call the Old Testament the *Reading*, מקרא, and not only the *Law*

תורה, because it is to be read clearly for the information of all that will hear. As a proof that they differ fundamentally from the Samaritans, who allow absolute divine authority to the Pentateuch, but not to the other books, they describe the whole collection indifferently as '*the twenty-four books*,' or 'the holy books.' They make no mention of Apocrypha. They have translated the Old Testament into vernacular languages, especially Arabic and Greek, and in later times into Tartar. There is a Tartar version in possession of the Karaites in the Crimea, where it has been carefully kept in the synagogues. This does not indicate that they undervalue the original Hebrew, but rather shows how much they value it, and desire its contents to be more fully understood. They uniformly insist that every Jew should understand the sacred language, and they speak as strongly as any of us could wish to speak of the insufficiency of versions. They were used to teach their children from the fifth or sixth year of their age to read Hebrew, and it is to be hoped that they do so still.

On the important matter of biblical interpretation they have very correct views, and say that they carry in their hands two lamps—the lamp of the Law and the lamp of intellect. They believe that God will impart the spirit of prophecy to enable them to use the lamps aright, and to explain that which is beyond the reach of human intellect unaided. They use the word *prophesy*, נבואה, in their creed and elsewhere, to signify divine teaching, precisely as its equivalent, *προφητεία*, is used in the New Testament.

It has been alleged by some Christian critics that they betray the prevailing Jewish ignorance in what relates to such phrases as 'Law,' 'justification,' and 'natural ability;' but it would be incredible that any honest Jew or Christian either could put off his proper character, and interchange himself with his opposite in sentiment, with-

out first being changed into another kind of person. The truth is that the censors may have much to learn, or perhaps to unlearn, on these very subjects. Only an influence superior to ourselves can impart a right feeling, and give power to appreciate the importance of the things represented by the three words written above. There are, however, broad and universal truths, first elements of right and wrong on which we all may judge. There are peculiar errors to which we are liable on all sides, and if it be a favourite saying with Karaites that *all is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven*, כל בידי שמים חוץ מן יראת שמים, they need to be instructed better. That fear is the beginning of wisdom, and it is God who gives it.

One of the commentators on the Ninth Article on judicial retribution well observes that 'the end of the whole matter is that every true believer should be firmly persuaded that the soul, if it be pure, shall ascend, after death, into the intellectual world, which is called "the world to come," and "the Garden of Eden," to live there for ever. But if it be guilty, and driven out of its habitation on account of transgressions, it shall live in anguish and shame in that place where the worm will not die, and where the fire will not be quenched; and this is the valley of Hinnom—*Gehenna.*'

In relation to this subject, we mark a discrepancy between the note now quoted, which has even a verbal agreement with our Lord's teaching in his sermon on the Mount, and their authorised custom of praying for the dead. Such prayer could not consistently be offered by anyone who believes in the doctrine of eternal punishment, for if the transgressor departed be suffering the undying worm and the unquenchable fire, there can be no use in praying for him. But as we have seen, the Karaites do pray for the dead, in which practice they certainly

agree with the Talmudists, who believe that Israelites who die unforgiven will indeed be cast into hell, but will be delivered soon by Abraham himself, who will come down from Paradise to claim his own children and rescue them from torment. That superstition, however, is ages older than the Talmud. It is well known that in the time of the Maccabees it was prevalent, or at least not unfrequent,—a custom allowed, though not commanded in the Law, and, as an old custom, not chargeable on the later Rabbis, as they called the Rabbanite Teachers, the Karaites have retained it without question.

If the tenth and last article were interpreted as it might not unfairly be, it would be made to express a somewhat better hope than that of the Talmudic creed, which supposes them who hold it to have put off all expectation of the Messiah's coming until 'the end of days,' for this article declares that He may be expected any day. Yet, in effect, the Karaite way of denying that He has come, and naming him rather as a temporal deliverer than a heavenly Saviour, is quite as obstructive as the other to everything like Christian faith. Any Jew, whether Karaite or Talmudist, would agree to the following doctrine of R. Japhet, which must be read attentively by any person who is just now speculating on the nearness of Karaites to Christians in faith, which is altogether an unreality.

'It is necessary,' says this Rabbi, 'that you should rightly understand that the King Messiah will come of the seed of David of blessed memory, who will neither add anything to the Scripture, nor take anything from it, who will neither abrogate anything that is accustomed in the present age,'—which is in direct contradiction to the Scripture which the Messiah came to fulfil,—'nor will he make any innovation on the natural course of things. The working of miracles will not be necessary to prove

the excellence of the Messiah, nor yet the raising of the dead. But he will gather home the banished ones of Israel; he will carry on the wars of the Lord, and subjugate all the people round about; he will build up the Sanctuary in its place; he will be careful to fulfil the Lord's commandments, as was David his father; and he will compel all Israel to walk in the way of the precepts and institutions of the Law. But if he (who pretends to be the Messiah) does none of these things, know that he is not the King Messiah, but merely like one of those rulers of the people who came after David.' Now this view of the Messiah does not only fail to explain the tenth Karaite article, but in reality contradicts it, and therefore it affords a momentary pleasure to remember that *this* R. Japhet whom we have now quoted, was not the Karaite of that name, but one of their bitterest enemies among the Talmudists.

But the truth is, that the Karaites are not themselves agreed. The ambiguity of the article is fully reflected in the hesitancy of their utterances, which may eventually improve, but cannot yet be other than doubtful. At present there is not much to be said of them. Like the Jews of old, they expect Elijah to come with the Messiah. They do not calculate the time of his expected advent, but discourage all such calculations. They say that He may be expected any moment, because it is written that He will come suddenly to his temple. Some of them, seeing that no new Messiah does come, assign a strange reason for his non-appearance. 'He lingers,' one of them has said, 'because Saturn, the Sabbath-Star, is the star of Israel, and the astronomers tell us that that star moves slowly in its orbit. Therefore, when the end arrives, but not before, by the will of God he will come.' But again they say,—speaking in a better spirit indeed, but coming no nearer to the truth,—that the fault of this delay is in the

banished Jews themselves, whose sins are the only obstacle; and then again they reason themselves into the semblance of a hope, for as this obstacle would cease if the guilty would repent, it is every day right, they think, that they should obtain the salvation of the Lord. The sentence of the creed is indeed at first sight obscure, for בכל יום may mean *any* day as well as *every* day, but the last words are quite inconsistent with the idea that the Messiah whom they expect will save any day anyone who repents. The salvation they think is not spiritual, or moral, but temporal. The Saviour whom they hope for is not one that would deliver them by his humiliation and sacrificial death. Messiah, Son of David, as they understand the lineage, is not that Being whom Christians acknowledge to be the Lord. His kingdom would be of this world, built up by dint of battle and conquest. If, then, the language is Talmudic after all, and 'Son of David' is but the antithesis of 'Son of Joseph,' we must give up the notion of discovering a leaning to the Gospel in their creed. This is the old stumbling-block.

CHAPTER XIII.

RITUAL AND CUSTOM.

WHILE Ahnan was in his infancy, a spirit of reform, or change if not reform, had entered into the synagogues of the East. Serini, who died in the year 720, had revised the *Eighteen Prayers*, which Rabbi Bechai describes as the most ancient form of prayer known. The number had been increased by the introduction of what is now the twelfth, raising the total number to nineteen. The twelfth is against apostates (to Christianity) and heretics (as were all who refused the Talmud). The false Messiah Abu Isa of Ispahan, about thirty years later, made an entirely new prayer-book to serve his own purpose as a false Christ. In the ninth century some Rabbis of the Babylonian High Schools approved the Liturgy of Amram ben Sheshua (A.D. 875), and in the tenth (A.D. 940) came out another prepared by Saadiah. These contained bitter imprecations on the Karaites, which awakened feelings of deep disgust.

Bitter invectives were launched against them in all the synagogues, and they were compelled, if it were only for the sake of self-respect and peace, to withdraw from the assemblies of Talmudists, and not only build synagogues for themselves, but have a Liturgy adapted to the requirements of their own belief. So they withdrew from the assemblages in which it was not possible any more to pray in peace. At the same time they began to justify

themselves in controversial writings in reply to the allegations of their adversaries, and, not content with a defensive position, sent out missionaries to convert the followers of tradition to their own side. Controversy was hatefully chaunted in the hymns and mingled in the prayers of the traditionists, but the so-called heretics betook themselves to prayer without any sacred song, worshipping with modest gravity, and committing their arguments to writing. Then they sent forth missionaries to circulate tracts, and by conversations and discourses invite their adversaries to candid consideration, and induce them, if that might be, to imitate the simplicity of their doctrine and manners, and unite themselves to their congregations.

New synagogue-rolls and revised Liturgies were now urgently required. Their numbers multiplied with great rapidity, and a Karaite Arab named Abú Soleimán Dawúd ben Hassan wrote (A.D. 960) 'an Order of Prayer for the Sons of the Text.' This became the basis of successive editions, until their separate congregations being permanently established, Karaism had grown into a separate Rite. The proper designations, *custom* מנהג, and *church* קהל, were imprinted on the Liturgies, and after paying most scrupulous regard to every distinctive mark of Karaite teaching and ceremonial, each church, or geographical division, takes its own distinctive mark of rubric and arrangement.[1]

An original description of the liturgical services of the Karaism, translated by Blasius Ugolinus, contains general information to the following effect:—

It is ordained that the Law be read consecutively, as is written in the Book of Ezra (now called Nehemiah), viii. 18. 'Also from day to day, from the first day to

[1] Fürst, Geschichte iv. *passim.*

the last day, be read in the book of the Law of God,' not from Sabbath to Sabbath only. The custom in the other synagogues is to repeat the same section daily, the week through, so that there is a sevenfold reading of the Pentateuch in the year. The Karaite method of consecutive reading is certainly the more useful, and therefore the more rational.

The sections of the Prophets are selected on festivals and at special services according to the day or the occasion. 'And if they will, they who read the Ten Commandments may read them each in his own Targum (or version), either in his own vernacular, or in any language whatever, it being that of the people; and they shall read the Scripture verse by verse, as it is written in the Order of Prayers.' This permission to read the Decalogue in the language of the people partly accounts for what some report of a custom of reading prayers in the vulgar tongue, which is not sustained by any authentic and direct account, so far as I can ascertain. It is right, they say, to address the Most High in the sacred language, but the Decalogue is not prayer, being addressed to men, not God, and should therefore be spoken in such language as men can understand.[1]

The new Testament rule goes further, and therefore is more perfect: it instructs us to *pray* in a language understood by the unlearned, that they may know how to say amen to the prayer. The intelligence early in the present century, that there were Bibles in a Tartar version in the synagogue of Djufut Kalé, in the Crimea, apparently for use by the congregation, added to previous knowledge of Arabic and Persian versions by Karaite translators, led to the conclusion that lessons of the Pentateuch or of the Prophets might be read in the

[1] תיקון הקראים *Institutio Karæorum* nunc primum à Blasio Ugolino ex Hebraico Latinè reditum. Ugolini Thes. Antiqq. Sacrr. tom. xxii.

synagogue in the vernacular of the country, although it is rather probable that such books are intended to assist the people to understand what the officiating minister is reading in Hebrew; but I am not aware that prayers are any where translated for this purpose, except that in a Liturgy for use in Russian synagogues there is a prayer for the Emperor with a version in Russ; but that stands alone, and from the style it appears to be introduced into the volume from another work, or, at least, literally reprinted, and inserted there in such a manner that the prayer offered in the Karaite synagogues of Russia might not appear to be different in any respect from the prayer offered elsewhere, and that the imperial hand, also, might not be less visibly controlling the worshippers.

The synagogues for which the *Directory*, תיקון, just quoted was prepared, were those of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Turkey. The date is A.M. 5171, which answers to A.D. 1411.

Nothing could be more strongly marked than the horror of the old Jews, and of those in the present day that are not modernised or enlightened—be it observed that these two words may here be of opposite signification—at the pronunciation of 'the name of four letters,' or by any attempt to pronounce it. The name is יהוה, and its true pronunciation is not known, but variously conjectured. All Jews, except the Karaites, substitute for it the word אֲדֹנָי LORD. They believe that, after the giving of the Law, it was not pronounced by any but the High Priest, and by him only in the temple. They say that it was uttered there on the Day of Atonement only, and then only when the priest was pronouncing the threefold benediction,—'THE LORD bless thee and keep thee; THE LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; THE LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.' (Num. vi. 24–26.) In

writing copies of the sacred text, they set down the letters only, but instead of what they might suppose to be the proper points they attach those belonging to the substituted word. When speaking Hebrew they use it not, but employ the usually substituted word, or some other, such as *the Name, Heaven, the Place, the All-sufficient, the Almighty, the Holy Blessed One.*

The Karaites, too, do this in common discourse, and are not less reverently careful than their brethren in common writing, but in reading Holy Scripture they pronounce, as they think, the otherwise unutterable name.

According to Trigland,[1] 'the Karaite doctors write thus, "Most of the wise men" decide that no man ought to offer prayer in any other language than Hebrew. They say this because our language is pure, not having any *verba nupta,* or obscene meanings,'—which, however, is a mistake, for there are several such words,—'and also because it is written that we are bound *to call upon the name* יהוה *plainly* ממש יהוה בשם לקרא, and this name is not to be found in any other language.' Now these last quoted words are not inspired, and therefore it should hardly be said that they are *written.* The emphatic word ממש is not in the Hebrew Bible, but is Rabbinical, and means *most distinctly, articulated as if you felt it.* But it conveys correctly enough their sense of the general purport of God's law concerning the invocation of His Name *without any change.* Here is the point of conscience, and although some of us must think that the letter is regarded rather than the spirit, nevertheless the honesty of the scruple deserves respect.

So strongly marked a characteristic in the language of the Karaite worshipper must not be overlooked. In the

[1] Dissertatio de Kuræis, cap. x.

Karaite Liturgies I find the name written in an abbreviated form, yet with a vocalisation so peculiar as to suggest that it is meant to determine the pronunciation which others have given up for lost. It is printed thus:—

הוֹדוּ לַיְוָי קִרְאוּ בִשְׁמוֹ.

Give praise to Yahvái, call upon his name.

The same form יְוָי, or יְוָי, is always used so far as I have observed.

From Ritual we pass to *Custom*; reserving it for a future chapter to illustrate the application of these general directions by one or two examples of synagogue worship as it now exists. The same scrupulosity distinguishes the Karaite in all the habits of his life, and is only mitigated by the independent spirit in which it is exercised, and thus considerably redeemed from the feebleness of a mere servile superstition.

The intelligent and conscientious Karaite is liable to many doubts, but it is already decided that he will not delegate to any human authority the responsibility which every man ought to bear for himself. He will not go to the old Rabbis to ask for a decision, but he will thankfully take counsel with the wise. But even the wise he will not consult until he is driven to them by necessity. For the direction he desires he searches in the plain text of Scripture. He compares 'spiritual things with spiritual,' text with text. Perhaps there is a doubt whether, according to the Law of Moses, fires may be lit on the Sabbath-day. He acknowledges the doubt; but the Law is silent. No prophet, speaking by inspiration, has furnished a solution of the doubt, and as he cannot submit to any uninspired master, he determines for himself to be guided by the obvious considerations of season and climate, or the exigencies of infancy, old age and

infirmity, or sickness. If such indications are not strong enough to settle the question, he keeps his own conscience clear by accepting the more strict interpretation of the Law for himself, and leaving the larger share of liberty to those who choose to take it; each one stands or falls to his own master.

When the letter of the Law is indistinct, a quick perception of the spirit may possibly prevent grave mistake. Yet two persons may not agree in their interpretation, although each thinks he can perceive the spirit, and in that case reliance on a faculty of perception which neither of the two possesses can only serve to aggravate contention. Therefore, all should seek to ascertain the *reason* of the Law,—the intent of the Lawgiver, not the mind of the interpreter. Not the House of Hillel with its traditions, nor the House of Shammai with its literalism.

There is a question whether a child may or may not be circumcised on the Sabbath-day. The Karaite determines that it may, because, he says, the circumcision-law is older than the Sabbath-law, and here he agrees with Hillel and the traditionists. They both arrive, as it happens, at a right conclusion, but hardly by the right way, for the premiss is faulty. The circumcision-law is as old as Abraham, and therefore older than Moses; but the Sabbath-law is old as the Creation, as we find in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis. The mere priority of a law is not always a sufficient reason for its observance, for, if it were, the ceremonial law of Moses could not be repealed, not even by the supreme authority of Him who gave it, which it would be absurd to say. The Karaites went further than Hillel, and this they did in consistence with the seventh and eighth articles of their own creed; and perhaps it will be found, on further inquiry, that they believed the Sabbath to have been made for *man*, not for the *Jew* exclusively,—but for the

stranger also, *whether he was within the Jew's gates or not.* On this subject, as on some others, there is found a remarkable agreement between Karaism and some portions of the New Testament.

'Jesus answered and said unto them,' the traditionists, 'I have done *one work*, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but the fathers;) and ye on the Sabbath-day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the Law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.' (John vii. 21–24.) The appearance, as the traditionists regarded the Law, was the doing a work of healing which, not being of immediately urgent necessity, should have been deferred until another day. Circumcision, however, was not to be deferred, because the eighth day, come when it might, was the day appointed by the God of Abraham, who also gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, and made no change in this respect. That there was nothing in the letter of the fourth commandment inconsistent with the conclusion arrived at by all parties, will appear yet more clearly, perhaps, after a perusal of the note below.[1] That way the Karaites

[1] We may safely accept the principle laid down by Hillel, and the subject in itself, apart from our present history, demands the studious consideration of every Christian theologian. Although the Sabbatic institution is as old as the Creation, it remains essentially unchanged, and the law of the Decalogue, although it was not required to strengthen the obligation, served admirably to define it. The precept as there given was not altogether negative, but, as to the sanctification of the day, it was quite positive. The negative part was absolute as to *one thing*, men's ordinary business. There is a positive command: 'Six days shalt thou *work* and *do all thy business* שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל־מְלַאכְתֶּךָ. Then follows the negative command, necessary to the fulfilment of the other: not a

actually take. 'We must do *God's work*,' they say, 'on the Sabbath, but we may not do *our own work*.' The principle of this distinction is most sound, but only an honest and good conscience can be trusted with its application.

With regard to the degrees within which marriage is prohibited, as they are specified in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Leviticus, the Karaites appear—yet only *appear*—to adopt the principle of the Talmudists, who quit the letter of the Law to bring in supplementary regulations of their own. Here, again, the Karaites have exercised their own judgment, in order to estimate more correctly the purport of the Law. The question whether a man may marry his deceased wife's sister has been finally settled by both parties, but they rest in opposite conclusions. The Rabbanite, unwilling to incur any restraint beyond what the bare letter of the Law exacts so distinctly that it cannot by force of casuistry be decently evaded, marries her without scruple. The Karaite, whatever be his inclination, will do no such thing. To him the letter is not so plainly permissive as it seems to the other. He believes that in the interpretation of the marriage-law, as it affects the moral conduct of mankind in

forbidding to *work*, if it be a work necessary, without regard to time; or to do, if the thing to be done is in pursuance of a perpetual obligation, or, which is the same thing, the discharge of a duty which God himself imposes, as was circumcision on the eighth day, fall when it might; or the laborious work of sacrifice, which cannot be included in men's ordinary business, like the vintage or the wheat harvest. A sacred rite, therefore, does not fall under the prohibition: 'Thou shalt not do any *business*' לֹא־תַעֲשֶׂה כָּל־מְלָאכָה. The business which a man does together with his cattle and in common with the (heathen) stranger that (may chance to be) within his gates, is not to be confounded with acts of solemn consecration to God, like that of circumcision. But let me say again that the Great Commentator on this law, as on all others, is our Lord Jesus Christ, whose teaching is in exact accordance with the literal sense of the commandment as it was originally written, and still continues without change.

their domestic relations, we ought not to take shelter under the silence, or dubious allowance of the letter in one place, but to observe the spirit of God's law as it is elsewhere clearly expressed; and that, in order to interpret with safety, we should reason from similitude and analogy. He so reasons and explains.

As Rabbi Mordecai boasts, in his reply to Trigland's inquiries, his brethren blamed the Rabbanites for not having had recourse, directly, to 'the written word,' in all doubtful cases, instead of uselessly resorting to the conflicting speculations which abound in the pages of the Talmud, the debates of men who never could agree among themselves, much less satisfy an intelligent inquirer, but who dispute uselessly, as if they were incapable of arguing otherwise than by contention, and are sufficiently satisfied if they can amuse themselves with a war of words, having but the impotent conclusion of a *Teeku.*[1]

Among other external peculiarities adopted for the sake of distinction, the Karaite has his phylacteries made round instead of square, and wears them differently. On this matter there is a Talmudic sentence. The Mishnah reads thus:—'He who makes his phylactery round makes it dangerous; and the commandment is not in it. He who puts it low on his forehead, or in the palm of his hand; behold, this is the way of the heretics.'[2] The Mishnah has 'heretics,' not Karaites; for although the name may have been heard of as early as the time of Simon ben Shetakh, both in Egypt and Palestine, that of Karaite could scarcely have come into general use until after the publication of the Mishnah or even the Talmud. Maimonides and Bartenora, in their commentaries on the

[1] This technical word "תיקו is formed by the initial letters of the following sentence—תשבי יפרוש קושיות ובעיות—The Tishbite will explain things hard and troublesome.

[2] Ordo Festorum, Megillah iv. 8.

place, say that the heretics here referred to followed the letter of the Law, and their own opinion; but there is a gloss which says 'that the Karaites despised the tradition of the wise men, and followed the letter of the Mosaic text, '*on thy hand and between thine eyes.*' This they still do, and I am told by a learned Hebrew friend, a native of Barbary, that if a Jew were seen to follow this custom in that country,—and I presume it would be the same elsewhere,—he would not be suffered to read in any synagogue, except it were one of his own, and that he would be treated by all, except the Karaites, as an excommunicated person.[1]

[1] Here the Rabbanite pleads the more extensive meaning of יד, which is applied to signify the entire limb as well as the hand. The question of literal meaning is not such as to separate the parties, but the real difficulty arises in the fact that both synagogues prefer to have each its own forms and its own badges.

CHAPTER XIV.

KARAITES IN SPAIN.

I AM satisfied that the word *Sephárad* סְפָרַד, which is found but once in the Old Testament, is the name of Spain. Whether it was the name of the entire peninsula at an earlier period, or became such later, it was in use in the sixth century before Christ, in preference to the more ancient *Tarshish*, properly belonging to the southern region, nearly answering the Andaluz (or Andalusia) of the Arabs. " In this persuasion I follow the Spanish Jews, who do not appear to have known Spain by any other name, except the Roman Hispania in later times, and are proud to be distinguished as ספרדים, or *Spaniards.* The passage in the prophecy of Obadiah (v. 20), 'The captivity of Jerusalem which is in Sephárad shall possess the cities of the south,' they uniformly so explain. It is no disproof to allege that the Septuagint Greek translator did not so understand the word, for he did not understand it at all, but left it untranslated. The Chaldee Targumist (Jonathan) and the Judæo-Spanish translators so render it, and so it was understood by writers of Rabbinical Hebrew a thousand years ago. Darius Hystaspis, near 2,400 years ago, appears also to have known Spain by this name, for when enumerating countries on the Mediterranean, he places this among them. It is graven in the rock of Behistun, if I mistake not the published translation of that inscription, where it

stands thus in a list of countries which had sent Darius tokens of submission, or gifts to avert invasion: '. . . . Egypt, those which are of the sea (i.e. the islands of the Mediterranean), *Saparda*, Ionia, &c.'[1] It would require a long digression from the main subject of these pages to state the reasons which, as I think, outweigh every objection, and justify my dissent from those who think the contrary. The only witness quoted against us in this geographical controversy is Jerome, in his note on the passage in Obadiah. He had heard say that Sephárad was a place in Bosphorus. His authority was the Jew who taught him Hebrew, but he had no further information, and gives it as his opinion that Bosphorus (not Sephárad) was equivalent with the Hebrew word גבול, *a boundary*, or *coast*. This loose conjecture avails nothing when set against the clear testimony of the Spanish Jews themselves, continued from time immemorial.

The ancestors of the Hebrew population of Spain began their settlements in Tarshish at the same time that Solomon was busy building the Temple of Jerusalem. In due time their infant communities were strengthened by the arrival of adventurers from the coast of Palestine, 'towards Sidon;' and their children soon united in giving welcome to other immigrants from the Holy Land, in ages when the tribes were troubled with that domestic strife which broke out after the death of Solomon. Every succeeding generation was distressed with civil war, or the incursions of enemies, or confusion and spoliation when their land was made a battle-field by the contend-

[1] The Behistun Inscription, column i. paragraph 6. Can they who suppose that Sephárad means Kertsch in the Crimea satisfy themselves that this Darius had ever such communication with that part of the world as the fact mentioned in this inscription shows to have taken place?

ing hosts of Egypt and Assyria, or Syria and Egypt, or Persia and the nations of the West. Then came the Roman conquest, the flight of such Jews as could escape, the deportations of prisoners and slaves. Fugitives who could not, as in former times, find their way by the Red Sea or the Nile to the dominions of the friendly sovereign of African Ethiopia, took the voyage attempted by Jonah, and embarked at Joppa for Tarshish. These all joined the Captivity of Jerusalem that was in Sepharad. 'Captivity,' they said, because every community of Israelites away from 'the Holy Land' was called a captivity, and every settler in a foreign country accounted himself an exile. But when lashed by the scourges of domestic tyranny, or civil war, or the invasion of strangers, the weary sufferers were glad to escape to the fine climate, fertile soil, safe harbours, groves and gardens of that Western paradise, where every man's industry found quick reward. Such was the course of events, ages before a Talmudist had breathed, or a degenerate Christian had brought dishonour on his Master's Name by wreaking vengeance on a son of Abraham; before a 'later Rabbi' had presumed to speak a syllable in derogation of the supreme authority of God's own written Word. These were the *origines* of Hebrew society in Spain, perhaps the only region in the world to which they had betaken themselves in voluntary and peaceful emigration, and, on arriving there, found prosperous homes.

No doubt the Hebrews of the dispersion in all lands, not to speak of their apostate brethren in Samaria and Judæa, had in various degrees neglected Moses' Law, but the old Sephardim of Spain had no faithless kings to make them worship idols for the satisfaction of a coward policy, neither did they live within sound of the debates of Hillelites and Shammaites, for those parties were not

formed until ages after their own faith and customs were settled in the Iberian peninsula, and, perhaps also, northward of the Pyrenean Mountains.

While the sages of Tiberias, Sora, Pumbeditha, and all the East were toiling to construct a second law to their own taste, the Hebrews of Elvira, Córdova, Toledo, Máqueda, and many other towns founded and peopled by their fathers, went on in their accustomed way, caring nothing for such occupations, but reading the Law in their well-frequented synagogues, none forbidding. They cultivated the land, taught the Celt and the Goth to do the like, and solemnly blessed the fruits that God gave in reward of their united labour. So did those naturalised Hebrew Spaniards earn the goodwill of their neighbours, those neighbours being far inferior in moral culture to themselves, who, in ancestry and intelligence, were far superior to all others in the world.

We must lament that those Bible-Jews were not converted to Christianity. We may reasonably say that they were blamable, or guilty for not accepting the evidences of historic fact; and that they were the more guilty for that the vail of tradition was not upon *their* hearts, when the Law of Moses was read, as it was upon the hearts of other Jews. Yet there was the tradition of unbelief, a blindness inherited from their fathers, a fatal misconception of the character of the Messiah. This, however, was not all peculiar to the Jews, and it serves to confirm the Apostolic saying that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. But the guilt was not all theirs. The Christians in Spain, when the Apostolic times were past, did not show the Jews the things of the Spirit of God, but exhibited a bitter and contemptuous enmity which forbade them to believe that there was anything divine in Christianity. Even the early Councils assailed them with threatenings

and curses, and so made faith impossible, if *they* were the preachers.

Until the dispersion of the Eastern colleges in the eleventh century, no great Rabbis came into Spain with pretension of authority to enforce Talmudical traditions. When zealots of the sort did come they found a community of Hebrews far superior to the Jews of Palestine. No Assyrian had bribed them to worship the gods of Nineveh. Their neighbours, the Carthaginians, so long as Carthage stood, had persisted in worshipping the Baal and Ashtaroth that recreant Jews in Samaria and in Jerusalem worshipped for ages; but while those gods had altars in Sidon and in Carthage, we do not hear of any altars being raised to them by the Jews of Sephárad. Neither do we hear that these Jews betrayed any ambition to make a hedge to protect God's Law, instead of taking care to keep it.

While the Prophet of Nazareth was pronouncing condemnation on the Pharisees of Jerusalem for their self-righteous contempt of the simplicity of the Old Testament Scriptures, that caste was not spread much beyond the Holy City, and it is not probable that there was a single company of those devotees to be found in Spain. As we have just now observed, it was a thousand years later when the propagators of Talmudism set up their schools in Spain. Then Spanish Jewry rapidly fell under their influence, and no doubt the converts were numerous and enthusiastic; but still the old Hebrews had precedence. They had their long family genealogies and patriotic memories. They had firm nerve and self-collected pride. They would turn away with disdain from the puerilities of Pharisaism, uphold their own simpler time-honoured customs, and refuse to bow before the Rabbanites.

Dr. Julius Fürst, to whose diligent labour on the Karaite manuscripts we are deeply indebted, steadily

translates Sephárad into Kertch in the Crimea, and sets down as a Tartar Jew every Karaite who is called *Sephardi*, and he is not alone in this opinion. Believing him to be mistaken, at the same time that I thankfully avail myself of his learned industry, I count some Karaites as Spanish Jews whom he considers to be Tartars.

Abraham Ben Simchah, a Sephardi, is noted by him as a Karaite writer in the year of our Lord 986. Now Jewish writers in general, who are very slow in allowing to Karaites any of the antiquity they claim, have said that Karaite books were first brought into Spain, and their doctrine promulgated there by Ibn al Tarás, a Spanish Jew, who was converted to that way of thinking when in Jerusalem by a Jerusalem Karaite, called in Arabic Abú 'l Faradg. Ibn al Tarás returned from Jerusalem to Spain in the year 1109 or 1110, and if this account were true, it would follow that until then there were no Karaites in Spain, which is inconsistent with many facts of history, and palpably in contradiction to the record of Ben Simchah 123 years, at least, before the return of Ibn Tarás with the writings of Abú 'l Faradg. Ben Simchah was no obscure person. He wrote a commentary on the five Books of Moses. He was poor, but studious; he travelled much in search of knowledge, and zealously propagated his belief. But he was not the only Karaite in Spain. A friend and 'countryman' of his, also a Karaite, Jacob, son of Reuben, compiled a commentary of the same kind, and wrote against Christianity.[1]

Rabbi Abraham Ben Dior undertook to be champion of the Rabbanites in Spain, and wrote a book with that intention.[2] Great agitation attended the controversy.

[1] Fürst, Geschichte iv. 31.

[2] I have not yet found the book. When R. Abraham Ben Dior is quoted as an antagonist of Faradg, the reference is to his book ספר הקבלה

The Spanish congregations were divided, and the controversy lasted long. It is said that the Karaites gained great power, especially at Burgos, and that, everywhere, they threatened to overthrow the customs that had been established for ages. A formal secession threatened, if it was not indeed consummated by the formation of new synagogues. The traditionists lavished vituperation on Faradg, and the other heretic, Tarás; and, if the whole story may be struck off at a stroke of the pen, King Alphonso IX. stilled the tempest by commanding the reformer to keep silence, and forbidding the Karaites to worship God in synagogues of their own. According to this account, the Rabbanites exulted, and one zealot, Abraham Zuccút, seeing the heresy utterly crushed, boasted for himself that he had ground the bones of Al Faradg in hell! At once, they say, the Karaites disappeared, and their heresy was never known again in Spain. Now nothing can be more untrue.

The struggle continued in Castile for more than half a century, during the reign of three kings; that is to say, from 1110 to 1161 inclusive, and their case can be plainly told. They were compelled by the force of persecution, as well as by force of conscience, to have synagogues for separate worship, but that worship, which probably began in the time of Alphonso VII., was interrupted by the mandate of Alphonso IX. There were two heavy persecutions at the instigation of violent Rabbanites, one in 1130, and the other, in 1150, continued until 1161, which was conducted with great severity, unless nothing should be thought severe in Spain, that was not as murderous as the Acts of Faith celebrated by inquisitors. In that case the vexatious persecutions of the Hebrew dissentients

or the סדר עולם זוטא, but I find there nothing more than a hard word or two bestowed on Al Faradg and another 'heretic,' with a statement of Ben Dior that he had written a book against them.

would be called gentle. It was, however, quite sharp enough to test the sincerity of those more primitive Jews, and to exalt and confirm their zeal. Castile, however, was but a part of Spain, and a prohibition which might silence them in that kingdom could not be extended to Leon and Aragon. In the Mohammedan territories, too, the Karaites could live at ease. In Catalonia they were on good terms with the other Jews, reciprocating tokens of friendship and interchanging studies. This, in brief, is what we gather from the Karaite manuscripts described by Fürst.[1]

We have conclusive evidence of the continuance of Karaites in Spain, not in forced communion with unwilling brethren, nor yet in open hostility, but side by side in friendly correspondence, without any violent concession required on either side. How the happy equilibrium was preserved we can only conjecture, but there was probably some latitudinarian relaxation on both sides, unless the Sheikh Hanoch Zaporta was an extreme example of conciliation. This learned Karaite flourished in Catalonia in the fifteenth century. Elijah Misrakhi, a Rabbanite in Constantinople, reporting the state of the Karaites in the year 1500, refers to him in these words:—'Mordechai Komtino tells me that his master, the Sheikh Hanoch Zaporta, who had been one of the great men and nobles of Catalonia, eminently learned in all the Talmud, and a famous Rabbi among the Rabbanites, was a pious man, and a distinguished teacher of the sons of the Karaites in all the instruction that they sought of him, whether out of the Talmud, or out of the Casuists (*Deciders,* פוסקים), or out of Rashi, or out of the simple exposition of the Law (פשט התורה), or out of the sciences (of the Gentiles).'[2] This brings us down to the time of the expulsion of the

[1] Geschichte iv. 58–60, v. 2.

[2] Geschichte v. 5, Anmerkungen.

Jews by Ferdinand and Isabella, and, if it were the only evidence on the subject, would suffice to disprove the statement hitherto current and undisputed that Karaism was suppressed in Spain. It rather suggests, what is more likely to be true, that the edict of Alphonso IX. had no more than a partial and temporary effect in Castile only, little or none in other provinces, and none at all in Catalonia.

After this brief review of some historic facts, some others can be better understood. We can perceive how the Jews in Spain, in spite of every inducement to repel a religious innovation, so promptly and cheerfully welcomed the writings of Al Faradg, the Ahnan of Spain, when he came to revive and advance Karaism, certainly not to proclaim it as a revolutionary innovation.

Hence we can understand an otherwise unintelligible statement of M. Kohl, a traveller in South Russia, that the Sephardim in Barbary,[1] descendants of the Jews finally banished from Spain in 1492, wrote or printed nearly all the Karaite books that he had seen in Russia.

Hence we can appreciate some peculiar features in the religious character of Spain long before the sixteenth century. We can admire, for example, the good sense of the first Bishop of Granada, after the conquest by Ferdinand and Isabella, who advised his superiors in Church and State to let him try to convert the Mohammedan citizens to Christianity by help of the Bible translated into

[1] Either this confirms my position that the Sephardim do not take their name from a place in Tartary, or M. Kohl is misinformed when attributing to Barbary what is due to the Crimea. I am not insensible of the difficulty created to myself by a mistake here, for if M. Kohl erroneously supposes that books printed in Kertsch,—but I do not find that there was ever a Karaite press *there*,—were printed, or rather written, in Barbary, I lose the support of an important literary fact. Yet I want to hear of a Karaite printing-press in Barbary, which I have not yet heard of. I can understand that the Karaites would *write* in Barbary, but I should like to know that they would *print* books there.

Arabic for their perusal, rather than by the help of soldiers and Inquisitors. He must have caught the better spirit of Bible study from Karaism, or he would not have dared to make so reasonable a proposal. He rejected the traditions of Rome, just as the Scripturist Jews rejected those of Babylon, and such indeed was the spirit of Spain until that spirit was broken by the united powers of Babylon and Rome, both hostile to the supreme authority of God's Law. Hence, again, we can fully understand how it was that those eminent translators, Juan Perez, Casiodoro de Reyna, and Cipriano de Valera, being Jews by birth or descent, cast their versions in a Karaite mould. The first of these, Juan Perez, writing in the year 1556, three years before any general persecution of 'Lutherans' began in Spain, and when the Inquisition had but recently proceeded against a very few Lutherans, or persons here and there suspected of Lutheranism, described at great length the sufferings of a people whom he represents as persecuted in every possible way, compelled to worship stocks and stones, deprived of their property, and themselves set up to sale. The entire description recalls the history of the 'new Christians,' persons forcibly impressed into the Church of Rome, and, for generations past, prevented from 'worshipping God, and depending entirely on Him.'[1]

In a dissertation prefixed to his version of the Old Testament, De Reyna leads the way in an innovation on established usage by writing in full the incommunicable name of God, which he spells 'Iehova,' following the notion of the Karaites, and of them alone, in a custom which the Rabbanites regarded with detestation. Valera follows him, and in his own address, prefixed to his revised edition of the same version, adds further reasons for

[1] *Breve tratado de la doctrina antigua de Dios, i de la nueva de los hombres.* Printed in 1560, and reprinted by Mr. Wiffen in 1852. Prologo, pp. 5, 6, 7.

insisting on this innovation. They both employ the same arguments as the Karaites on various subjects. They speak in the same style, and, in describing their antagonists, apply to them the same epithets; 'modern Rabbis,' in particular. Any Spanish scholar who is familiar with the religious history of Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may satisfy himself by reference to the last-quoted volume of the original edition of Valera's Spanish Bible, printed in Amsterdam in the year 1602.

The manners of the Spanish Karaites commended them to general esteem. They were very temperate, and scrupulously observed the distinction between clean and unclean meats, considering that it was established by the Divine Lawgiver for the sake of health, as well as for moral reasons. They punished drunkards and profligate persons with infamy, and called them *sinners*, חוטאים. They rendered great honour to their parents, and, even more than the Rabbanites, reverenced the Rabbis. In all their customs they avoided conformity to the Gentiles. Their aged men were grave and were all careful to observe the Levitical prohibition by not marring the corners of their beards, as the heathen did, but letting them grow freely in their natural form.

The plan of the present work does not allow digression, but no ecclesiastical historian should fail to investigate the history of the Spanish Karaites in relation to the Lutheran Reformation. But they were not influenced by it in any appreciable degree. He will find their sympathies to be with Zuinglius rather than Luther, and the strong tincture of Judaism in the theological language of the Republican nations of the Reformation is probably due to their early influence in the south of Europe. A Zuinglian congregation and a Karaite synagogue were as nearly alike as two things could be that were otherwise so essentially different from their separate relations to the Law and to the Gospel.

CHAPTER XV.

DECLINE OF KARAISM.

THIS chapter is inevitably incomplete, and must be regarded as no more than a slight contribution towards an essential part of Karaite history—the first hint towards a future sketch of the condition of that people in their darkest times, when scattered in remote regions of the three divisions of the Old World.

So long as the congregations were too large or too numerous to be dispersed at bidding, or for their members to be trodden under foot with impunity, where a minority of dissentient Israelites was important enough to obtain the protection of a Gentile Government from the oppression of their stronger brethren, such a minority might lift up its head and prosper for a time. In such favouring circumstances it might even gather new strength by the occasional accession of proselytes, but prosperity so adventitious could not long continue. It vanished like a gleam of sunshine obscured by the returning storm. So did congregation after congregation dwindle away, until finally dispersed by persecution too stubborn to relent. There were also special causes of decay, which nothing human could resist. Such causes are detailed by Rabbi Mordecai in his answer to the inquiries of Trigland. Acknowledging that his information is extremely imperfect, the Rabbi ventures to mark three epochs in the history of his people, which he advises future inquirers to

distinguish, if they would arrive at any certain conclusion on the subject.

1. His *first epoch* begins with the formation of separate congregations of seceders from the main body of Traditionists at the time when R. Simon ben Shétakh, having returned from Egypt to Jerusalem, carried the notion of Rabbinical authority to a higher pitch than any of his predecessors. Ben Shétakh, it will be remembered, was insufferably arrogant, and his colleague Ben Tabbaï openly declared against him. This division, under the leading of the hostile chiefs, occurred nearly a century before Christ, but how far the adherents of Ben Tabbaï formed new congregations, or otherwise took a decidedly separate position,—how far they assumed or accepted a distinctive name, such as *Karaim*, or at what time it may be considered they came to be commonly so called, are questions which R. Mordecai could not undertake to answer.

There is no reason to believe that, at that time, the two 'houses' were so absolutely divided, or that either of them had any other designation than that which was usual, each taking the name of its master, and each recognised as a legitimate part of the House of Israel. On reference to the New Testament, we cannot discover any trace of such a separation, as regards Karaites, although there are passages in the Gospel history where formal division on a point of vital importance and distinctive name could not have been concealed with due regard to integrity of narrative. And even where indications that such a body as the Karaites was on the field might be expected to appear, they are not to be found, although earnestly sought for. The lawyers so often mentioned as devoted students of the Law of Moses might, from their name, be mistaken for Karaites. Our Lord's question to a lawyer, 'How *readest* thou?' almost challenges the conclu-

sion that that person was a *Son of the Reading*, קראי, but not only is the spirit of his question 'Who is my neighbour?' different from the spirit of primitive Karaism, the view of the Law and its obligation and peculiar dignity which the lawyers in the New Testament so often take, is utterly incompatible with the conclusion that they were Karaites. They might rather be classsed with Rabbanites the most exalted. Among the religious and political questions submitted to our Lord, it is true that there were some of precisely the same kind as those agitated between the houses of Hillel and Shammai, but I cannot, for my own part, detect any allusion to the presence of what, among us, is oddly, but familiarly, called a *denomination*. Much less is there any direct mention of persons associated for the express purpose of upholding the exclusive authority of the Law of Moses; nor do we read of any association established for upholding the Oral Law. The events which gave rise to such a state of things had not yet come to pass.

The external unity of the Hebrew Church was not yet broken, although its internal peace was much disturbed. Synagogues differed, but ostensibly the difference was only that of language or of country, necessitating only the use of such words as Hebrew, Grecian, Libertine. No doctrinal or disciplinary disunion is so much as hinted. When our Lord bade the Jews to search the Scriptures, He addressed Himself to all in general; and while He condemned the Pharisees for enforcing obedience to their traditionary precepts, no party of anti-traditional remonstrants comes forward to claim His approval or to disclaim His accusations. Rather, we must infer from all we read that no community, sect, or synagogue was clear from the guilt of making God's Law of none effect by their traditions, and of substituting the commandments of men for His commandments. There might be members of all

the synagogues worthy to be called Israelites indeed, and in fact there were many such, but as yet they were interspersed in the mass—a leaven of life, striving to cast off the prevalent corruption.

The minds of men were changing, and were about to change yet much more, as the two antagonist principles gained greater activity. The ministrations of the incarnate Son of God were already working such effect that reconciliation between the parties became thenceforth impossible. But all this notwithstanding, until the Mishnah was finally compiled, published, and accepted as a second edition of the Law, or, at least, an authoritative exposition of it, there was no place made for a formal opposition thereto. Nevertheless, we accept this 'first epoch' of R. Mordecai as belonging to the Karaite history. Properly speaking, it must be taken as prefatory, and necessary to a full understanding of the subject.[1] We have so taken it.

2. His *second epoch* begins in the middle of the eighth century, when Ahnan, a Karaite from Judea, made an open stand against the Eastern Talmudists. R. Mordecai does not recognise the influence of our Lord's ministry and of early Christianity on the synagogue, although that influence must have been very great, and it is certain that, long before Ahnan, an exceedingly numerous party, in Palestine and far away, was known by the honourable name of Karaim. We trace them from Babylonia to Tartary. When the eminent preacher came from Jerusalem and stirred the controversy anew among the Eastern Jews, the time had fully come for a world-wide separation, not now an incipient movement. Two different laws had come into full force for the government of separate congregations—two forms of worship—two rules of conscience.

[1] This part of the subject is treated above in Chapter V., on the New Testament.

But it requires far more knowledge than R. Mordecai could have possessed to divide the Karaite history into periods, and the more we learn the more evident it becomes that it could not be so written as to include the entire field under equal chronological divisions. We may, nevertheless, conjecture that while society was for the most part barbarous in all parts of their dispersion, and Jews of all sorts were scattered in countries rarely visited by persons capable of adequately reporting what they saw, there were Karaite companies living far away from their brethren in a state of perfect isolation, enjoying liberty of conscience indeed, but giving up for its sake all the comforts of civilised society, and missing at the same time the advantages of intelligent association and instruction in the form of religion they inherited from their fathers. An instance of the kind occurs in the Itinerary of Rabbi Petakhiah of Ratisbon, who travelled in Turcomania, Armenia, and Tartary in the eleventh century.

In Tartary this traveller found not any Jews, as he is pleased to say, but only *heretics,* with whom he remonstrated for their inobservance of the 'faith delivered' to his nation by the ancient teachers. To his remonstrance they replied that their fathers had not so taught *them*; but their conscientious observance of the religion they had received evidently conciliated his favourable regard. He reports that they most rigidly observed the Sabbath, and even broke on the sixth day of the week the bread they were to eat on the seventh. Rather than light a fire on that holy day, or even prepare a light of any sort, they ate their food in darkness. Lest they should desecrate the Sabbath-day by travelling, they did not allow themselves the recreation of what other Jews would call 'the Sabbath-day's journey,' but sat still in one place. They had no 'book of prayers'—perhaps through

inability to obtain copies—but made use of Psalms only, which they read instead of prayers. R. Petakhiah read to them prayers from his own liturgy, explained to them how those prayers were recited in the synagogues, and repeated the blessings which the Jews in Germany pronounce over their food; and they, free from bigotry, expressed their approbation of them all. They had never heard of Talmud, nor could they imagine what that might be to which the other Jews gave more especially so honourable a name. Whether their fathers had emigrated from Babylonia or Palestine, Petakhiah was not informed, but he inferred that they could not have brought any Talmudic writings with them. We may also infer that they were either Jews of some old captivity, or descendants of the early Karaites known to the King of Chozar. The latter supposition is the more probable, because of the identity of their plain and self-denying customs with those of the Sons of the Reading. They are not described as Essenes, and do not appear to have had any other traditions than those of the Karaites of an age long past.[1] We know, however, that at this very time the Karaites in general were flourishing.

3. The *third epoch* noted by R. Mordecai is not known by any one determining event, and the beginnings were imperceptible. He says that for ages the Karaites were in great prosperity, until about the close of the fourteenth century or beginning of the fifteenth, when indications of decay transpired here and there. R. Ghedalyah, Son of Don David Yakhyah, found the congregations in Constantinople unable to maintain their ground against the encroachments of the Rabbanites. In Constantinople, the Crimea, and Russia, there were still many considerable relics of ancient wealth and even

[1] R. Petachiæ Itinerarium, in Ugolini Bibliothecâ Antiqq. Sacrr. Orientalium, tom. vi.

grandeur, which served to show that the Karaism of that day was but a miserable wreck of what it had been six or seven hundred years before in those lands.

This Rabbi honestly sketches its downward course from a state of prosperity to one of great obscurity and comparative insignificance. In Egypt their synagogues had been large and numerous, especially at Cairo; but Alexandria is probably the city where a library, once consisting of a hundred thousand Greek and Arabic volumes, attached to one of the synagogues, afforded visible proof of what there is otherwise abundant evidence, that the 'Bible Jews' did not abominate Gentile philosophy, or, to speak more correctly, did not refuse to increase their store of learning by accepting knowledge from the Gentiles. But the Egyptians, whether Mussulmans or Copts, did not reciprocate that liberality, which they might have wisely done. They gathered round the synagogues in crowds, assailed the congregations, broke into the libraries, and destroyed the books. Their schools, too, were dispersed by violence, so that books and learning began to perish in the same ruin. The Karaites, reduced to abject poverty, could not any longer educate their children. Successive generations, plunged into ignorance, became more and more debased. Even their household memories and family traditions faded out of mind, amidst uncertain wanderings, or, when they were somewhat less wretched, in homes precarious and bare of comfort. Christians in the time of Julian, when the pagan apostate forbade them to educate their children Christianly, could scarcely have suffered in a less degree.

After the wreck of literature came almost an extinction of history; so that when this Karaite Rabbi was requested to give us Christians some account of his people, he could tell nothing until he had taken long journeys in search of books which were reported to be in

the possession of private persons in Constantinople and Turkey, Cairo and Egypt, Damascus, the Holy Land, Kalé in the Crimea, and where else none could tell. One cannot read some prefatory observations in his twelve books—each book under the name of a tribe—without perceiving that he would have been utterly destitute of pecuniary means for undertaking such researches on his own account. Trigland, who must never be forgotten, no doubt assisted him.

The reader, however, will bear in mind that Karaites were not alone in suffering. Christians in the East and Jews in the West suffered quite as much, and were probably martyred more extensively, and more fiercely, too, than any of the Karaite communities—at least, with very rare exceptions.

Several years before the correspondence of Trigland with R. Mordecai, the state of the Karaites in Egypt in the seventeenth century was feelingly described by one of their own communion. Rabbi Samuel the Holy, Son of David Yahmsel, visited Egypt in the autumn of 1641. Unlike some of their less gracious Rabbanite brethren, he calls them Jews. 'The Egyptian Jews,' he says—assigning to them a certain pre-eminence—received him well on his arrival at Cairo, and conducted him to the house of the Karaite Nasi (Prince), whose name was Baruch, a Rabbi, who gave him and his fellow-travellers honourable entertainment.

He commends them highly for exemplary conduct, liberality, humility, benevolence towards all their neighbours, and piety towards God. There is no reason to think this high praise to be exaggerated, for it fully agrees with their excellent reputation in other countries. He relates how carefully they observed all that is commanded in God's most holy Law, walking aright in the way of truth, and keeping the holy Sabbath, with obser-

vance of sacred ritual therein. He says that on the Sabbath-day they lit no lamps, nor tasted any hot food, but fires and lights were burning on the eves of holy days, and the lamps in the synagogues kept burning from nightfall until morning light. Like all good Jews, they were very scrupulous in the preparation of their food, and beyond all others careful that the animal to be slaughtered should be free from the slightest blemish. They would not accept food of any kind from the Mohammedans, except only vegetables or fruits; neither would they take from Rabbanites bread, nor wine, nor mead, if they were to offer it. They would have no fellowship with them, would not intermarry, nor eat or drink together. This rigid separation, however, was the more easy, as the Karaites in Egypt were very numerous in Cairo, had butchers and bakers of their own, and dealers in every kind of food. As the Jews of sixteen centuries before their time would have no dealings with Samaritans, so neither would these Karaites deal in any way with those Rabbanites. They did not regard them as true Israelites nor lawful Jews. So these, the *Karaim*, were by eminence 'the Egyptian Jews'!

R. Samuel reports that they were poor indeed, but not second to any people for honesty. Their fathers had not been so poor. Their chief synagogue was handsome; it rested on fourteen marble pillars, and had five *arks* (חיכלות) and fourteen rolls of the Law. The library belonging to the synagogue contained many Karaite books in Arabic manuscript. In the court of one Aaron there was a lesser synagogue, with two rolls of the Law and other books. There were also smaller houses, or oratories, set apart for prayer. In former times there had been seventy oratories, but the number was then reduced to fifty.

Most remarkable of all was a house devoted to pur-

poses of religion, having a lofty tower, which the early Karaites used as an observatory to watch for the new moons. Rabbi Samuel, ascending the tower, counted ninety steps above the house-roof. Every Sabbath and feast-day they brought out the rolls of the Law with great ceremony, and read the appointed Parashah with profound solemnity. On other days it was their custom to read the same at home, but without limiting themselves to the order of reading, and also the Haphtaroth. The same things, as they heard, were done in Jerusalem and in Damascus by the Karaites of those cities. We learned from R. Mordecai how the synagogues and libraries of Egypt were pillaged, and his account, therefore, must be added to that of his predecessor.

R. Samuel and his party visited Old Cairo also, where was a synagogue originally belonging to the Karaites, but then in possession of the Rabbanites, who would not now suffer them so much as to look upon the Book of the Law. They longed to see it, and offered a handsome present to the keeper of the place; but no money would bribe him to allow, as he fancied, the desecration of that sacred object by even the sight of the eye of those brethren who would have laid down their lives rather than erase or change a letter of it. But they bore the denial patiently, sang plaintive Hebrew hymns in the synagogue which, centuries before, had resounded with their fathers' hallelujahs; gave the man money to buy oil for the lamps, offered prayer which no custodian could hinder, and withdrew in sadness. The doors of their Talmudist brethren were closed, but an Arab entertained them in the city. The Mussulman gave them food which they did not then refuse, and a lodging which they gratefully enjoyed. Next morning their host took them out of the city of the Pharaohs into a delicious Egyptian garden, where the sons of Ishmael accepted

entertainment in return from the son of Isaac—the children of the free woman were comforted by the son of the bond.[1]

But notwithstanding their calamities in the more ancient homes of their fathers, the living witnesses against the fabricated 'ordinances from Mount Sinai' found hospitality in other lands; on some secluded spots of Northern Europe their affairs were prosperous. In Lithuania, for example, where they had weathered many storms of opposition, they were at that time in tranquillity. They had a synagogue in the town of Troca, or Torok, 'holy, full of riches, glory, science divine, philosophic, and refined.' Learning, says Mordecai, was diffused from Torok to the ends of the earth. Wise men alike of the Rabbanites and the Christians, especially Christian priests, resorted thither to dispute with them, and the Karaite sages proved themselves to be 'swift in the race, and well skilled in all wisdom and in various learning.' But in the year 1648, when bands of Greeks devastated parts of Lithuania and Poland, and again in 1654, when Russians did the like, many synagogues of both Rabbanites and Karaites were destroyed, their academies ruined, and their books burnt. They had not yet recovered from the shock. Even then, however, he could say that there were a few learned men among the fugitives, but not enough to keep alive the flame of religion and learning. 'The sons of the Law were lost in oblivion, and left without a blessing.' Yet some of the Lithuanian wanderers persevered in collecting fragments of ancient learning, and found some books in Arabia, Syria, and Egypt. The 'feeble hand' of R. Mordecai himself, as he moderately estimates his power, copied from those books. All that could shed light on the condition of his

[1] R. Samuelis Itinerarium, in Ugolino Thesauro, tom. vii.

people he transcribed, 'letter by letter, word by word.' Trigland profited by those researches, and much of what I have repeated from his admirable *Diatribe* was at first collected by this indefatigable Rabbi, and is thankfully acknowledged by his learned Christian friend.

The 'Troca' (Torok), so briefly named by Mordecai, was a station of great importance. It is a town in the Russian province of Wilna, situate on the border of a lake, about 17 miles west of that metropolis. When Lithuania became a State under the government of its own grand duke, and attached to the kingdom of Poland, it was the wise policy of the newly established ruler to encourage the immigration of such persons as were likely to enrich the country by their skilful industry as agriculturists and traders. Among the Karaite manuscripts lately collected, there is a passage which throws light on this part of Karaite history. It occurs in the narrative of a traveller in the year 1785, who states that 'more than five hundred years before, when the Karaites were in the land of Krim, in the city of Sulchat, a king of the cities, or provinces, of Poland desired them of the king in whose dominions they were, loved them, and honoured them exceedingly.'[1] The name of the Polish king is not mentioned, but the date of his correspondence with the Tartar and the immigration of the Karaites into Lithuania is determined more exactly by that of the colonisation of Wilna under the first grand duke, who effectually recovered his newly acquired territory from a state of savage wildness, and on his entry on that government married a daughter of the King of Poland, and annexed the archduchy to that kingdom. The choice of Karaite Jews from Tartary to aid in the arduous labour of early civilisation implied a confidence in their skill and

[1] The original of the passage is given by Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums*, Bd. iii. Anmerkungen, St. 10, Num. 1.

integrity which was not abused, but continues to this day, and to this day is justified by their superior character. Successive immigrations, besides the natural increase of a prolific race, soon made the Karaite population very numerous. Liberal grants invested them with valuable privileges, rare indeed in the history of the Israelitish dispersion. Wealth, honestly earned, raised them to a high position, of which the only apparent evil was that it provoked envy and invited spoliation in times of war.

One religious feature of Karaism, as it was disclosed in Poland in a later age, now forces itself on our attention, and demands a studious consideration.

It will be remembered that in the earlier years of the religious Reformation of the sixteenth century, the scepticism which had prevailed so generally in Rome and the Italian States, chiefly among the higher clergy, and perhaps most intensely in the highest, tainted the Italian mind, and imparted a peculiar stamp of heterodoxy to the adherents of the Reformation in that country. The Court of Rome had sagaciously put off the garb of pagan laxity which it had worn so jauntily since the revival of letters. The Council of Trent, while reviewing every article of Roman theology, having stated in its canons the fundamental articles of Christian faith with a clearness that was indeed much needed, gave strict instructions to all the licensed preachers of their Church, and so enabled them to assume a new appearance of sound faith, at least in those particulars which would contrast not only with their former heterodoxy, now to be concealed, but with the open heterodoxy of certain fugitive Italian Protestants. Those persons found congenial society among the Jews in Poland, who, in spite of their heroic adherence to the letter of the Mosaic Law, had not accepted the more fully unfolded verity of Christian revelation.

Heretics they were in the eye of Rome, and the persecution that haunted them drove them at once into the arms of the Polish Karaites; for, like them, and even more than they, these protesters against Rome hated tradition and all human authority. Like the Karaites, they were sturdy Monotheists in the same narrow sense. They outran Arius in the race of unbelief. Their own Socino left his name to a sect, just as Sadok had left his, and Socino, with his principal followers, chose Poland to be at once their asylum and their citadel. From that time it became the centre of Socinianism in Europe. In Poland the Jew and the Christian both enjoyed religious liberty, and for once the most orthodox of the Israelites and the least orthodox of the Christians could fraternise on *one* point, and on only one.

One of those Jews was Isaac, son of Abraham of Torok, the Karaite. He was born in that town in 1533, after the heat of controversy between the two divisions of Judaism had cooled. He was brought up in the study of Talmudism as a branch of Jewish learning, and in the faith of the Karaite, cold withal, until quickened and elevated under the impulse of persecution. Young Isaac, to whom Hebrew was vernacular, was also liberally educated in the Latin and Polish languages. In these languages he read the chief controversial writings, as they were issued by their eminent authors, against the Church of Rome. But not without bias, and perhaps partially, or with selection. Judging from his own account of himself, we might venture to believe that his favourite readings were Socinian. He tells us that he was in habits of free and cordial intercourse with the nobility and clergy of all sorts, but chiefly, if not entirely, with dissentients from Rome. He was in sincerity a Karaite Jew, but the peculiar controversy of which Lithuania was the very focus incessantly occupied his thoughts, and constant

exercitation on his own side of the religious conflict *sharpened* his intellect without enlarging it.

He could as readily agree with the Rabbanite and the Socinian as with Ahnan himself, had he been present, on the one idea of Monotheism, as by them conceived. With unhesitating unanimity, they would all assert that our Blessed Saviour was a mere man, not God manifest in the flesh. His companions in unbelief heard him with avidity, and submitted to his decision questions that arose between the assailants and the advocates of the true Catholic doctrine concerning the Person of Christ and the Divinity of the Holy Ghost. His notes on the moot questions became very numerous.

Budny, or Budnæus, a notorious propagator of extreme Socinianism, conferred with him. The subject of those conferences was probably the text of the New Testament, Budny being at that time busy in framing a version in the Socinian sense. In the year 1572 that vitiated version issued from the press in Nieswicz, and no sooner did it come to light than it was put into the hands of Rabbi Isaac for his use, and, of course, for the benefit (if one may use the word) of the Socinian party. Forthwith the Rabbi set to work on a confutation of Christianity. He read the New Testament in this version with the cool and orderly habit of a hard-working student. Every passage on which he could fix a doubt or hazard a denial was marked as it stands in the sacred Book, and for the purpose of controversy. The entire stock of anti-Christian cavils with which educated Jews, at least, are familiar, combined with the objections of the Socinians, were brought to bear on the New Testament, by direct attack on all the leading sentences in relation to the Person, Life, and Ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The work, written in Hebrew, under the title of *Confirmation of the Faith* (חזוק אמונה), is perhaps the least

offensive of any that Jews have written against the Christian faith, especially in their 'sacred language,'—not the grand Hebrew of the Old Testament, but often in the humblest Rabbinic, abundant in words and phrases adapted to the most indecent conversation. It is, perhaps, the masterpiece of Jewish controversy against Christ; specious, when in the hands of uninstructed readers; and to the apprehension of the common crowd it would seem unanswerable. I have read the tract with sorrow, yet, after all, on reflection, gladness. Glad am I to observe that, as such productions must come, in order that the inquiries of Jews may be answered, one that a Christian could sit down to answer without a sense of degradation proceeded from the pen of a Karaite. With this comparatively modern incident, we close this brief chapter on the decline of Karaism; and I venture to congratulate every candid Karaite, in the conviction that this eminent representative of their's would not probably have attacked Christianity at all had he not been first instigated by men calling themselves Christians,[1] yet denying the Divine majesty of Christ.

The book was made known to Christians in Europe by Wagenseil, who visited Ceuta, and found it there in manuscript, brought from the interior of Barbary. I know that it is much read by Barbary Jews, who probably have it in that form. One of them, an earnest inquirer and friend of my own, used to spend hours at night in copying passages from it at home, and hours again by day in obtaining my assistance to confute them to his own satisfaction. My friend was, unconsciously to himself, a Karaite in doctrine—and in sympathy, if not yet quite in faith, a Christian. I am reminded, in recollection of this circumstance, of the statement of M. Kohl concerning Karaite books in Barbary.

[1] *Munimen Fidei*, Procem. ad Part. ii. apud *Tela Ignea Satanæ* Wagenselii.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRESENT STATE OF SYNAGOGUE-WORSHIP IN RUSSIA.

THE trans-Caucasian region, where the simpler-minded Sons of the Reading found hospitable treatment among the pagan Chozars, long before the great Karaite revival of the eighth century—this same region, now part of the vast Russian empire, has been ever since a land of refuge to their children. It is now chiefly in Russia that their worship flourishes, and the student who can command means and find opportunity may now ascertain for himself their doctrine, their manner of worship, and their customs, by personal observation in Southern Russia. He may provide himself with a printed copy of their Prayer-book, which a bookseller can procure for him from Vienna, and I believe he will find therein little or nothing to prevent him from being present in their congregations without compromise on his part as a Christian.[1]

[1] Besides the old edition of the Liturgy printed by Bomberg in Venice, of which I have made mention in a preceding chapter, the סדור תפלות כמנהג הקראים has been frequently printed, and the following editions are in the British Museum:—One printed in Kalè, in three quarto volumes, in the year 1806; the typography is not clear, nor the paper good. One in Eupatoria, also of four quarto volumes, in 1836; the work is rough, but neither this nor the preceding edition bears any further mark of carelessness. So late as 1854 an edition for use in Russia was printed in Vienna; the typography is excellent, as becomes the Viennese press, and the paper corresponds in goodness. Here, again, are four volumes in large octavo. One page is occupied with prayers for the Emperor of Russia and the empire, with the translation into Russ in parallel

The Rev. Dr. Henderson, well known as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, visited Lutzk, a town of Polish Russia, in the year 1821, and his report of a service in the Karaite synagogue was until very recently the only source of information on this point to English readers.

The Doctor attended the service at Lutzk on the Day of Pentecost. He describes the synagogue as a square wooden building situate in the 'back part' of the town, capable of containing about two hundred persons, the slight material, small size, and meanness of the structure either indicating poverty, or rude simplicity of taste, with indifference to architectural propriety. There must have been some special reasons to account for the meanness of the synagogue in this place. The entrance was at the east side, where the door opened at once into the so-called outer court, a small part of the scanty area appropriated to the women, and divided from the rest of the synagogue by a wooden partition. 'A chink,' as he calls it, at such a height from the floor that the women could peep through, allowed them some imperfect sight of what was going on within.

The interior, or court of the men, could be soon described. The first object that met the eye on entrance was the 'Ark of the Covenant' on the western wall, in the centre, just opposite the door. It is likened to a cupboard behind a curtain—a long curtain hanging eight feet from top to bottom, and measuring about two feet

columns. That appears, however, to be a mere transcript of the prayers offered in the Jewish synagogues in general, having mention of *Judah*, and also the name יהוה, which I am almost sure is not found elsewhere in the Liturgies in that form, and *not* the usual יְיָ. These last are sumptuous volumes, but not one of the three impression here mentioned is such as would be printed for cheap sale. Yet all the Karaites are said to be able to read, and it would seem that in the synagogue they all use books.

and a half across, from edge to edge. There were two similar cases, or cupboards, one on each side the ark. The ark itself contained the Book of the Law, a synagogue-roll, as usual. In the two 'side-cupboards' were kept books for the use of the Rabbis, and other persons officiating. Slightly in advance of the ark, on a platform, was a small desk, at which the reader or minister stood when reading. In front of this lectern, near the centre of the men's court, stood a square table, painted blue,—as must have been discovered by curious examination,—covered with a cloth of woollen stuff of many colours, and over this a costly covering of richly embroidered and ornamented silk. On each side of this central table was placed a large candelabrum with seven branches, filled with wax candles. Around the 'court' stood several desks, each having a box under it to hold books for the congregation.

'Instead of the larger and smaller *talith*, or white woollen garments which other Jews put on them when they go into their synagogues,' the Karaites wear a sort of tippet, consisting of two long strips of cloth, passed over the shoulders, attached to a small square piece on the back, and hanging down in front like a stole or scarf, more or less ornamented according to the wealth or taste of the wearer. To the pendant corners of this tippet are attached the *tsisith*, or fringes, two to each; the threads either answering to the number of precepts in the Law, or otherwise made to represent them. These fringes the wearer kisses and puts on his eyes at different parts of the service (I suppose at reading the *Shemá*, or 'Hear, O Israel,' &c.), as a sign that the commandments, of which the threads are a sign, are the only medium of bringing light to the eyes.[1]

[1] The reader scarcely needs to be reminded that this is done by all Jews in obedience to the command in Numbers xv. 38–40, and that it is

The Rabbi wore a long robe, or cassock, of black silk, and an ample square veil, the usual *great talith* (טלית גדול), covered his head, and fell nearly to his feet. Dr. Henderson observed that the prophecy of Joel quoted by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost was read in the Karaite congregation in that Pentecostal service, and asks if we may not conclude, 'from the pertinacity with which this ancient sect adhered to their primitive institutions, that the same coincidence took place in the Apostolic age; that, in the Divine prescience, those who selected the Haphtarahs, or sections from the Prophets, to be read in the synagogues, were directed to choose this passage from Joel for the particular feast on which it was to receive its accomplishment; and that the Apostle Peter, in quoting the lesson for the day, had recourse to the most powerful argument which he could possibly have used, in order to convince a Jew of the Divine nature of the transactions exhibited on that stupendous occasion.'

As this conjecture of Dr. Henderson has been sometimes quoted, and, at first sight, captivates one's understanding, and might be hastily ventured in pleading with a Jew, where every argument ought to be well weighed in justice to all parties, and in honour to Him whom we desire to commend to the Jews as their Saviour and ours, I must say a word or two. On examining the Kalè

referred to in Matthew xxiii. 5. But I would invite the Jewish antiquarian to consider whether the *older* fashion is not that of the private members of the Karaite Synagogue. If the Jews had worn the talith as a veil on the head when at prayer, would St. Paul have said so absolutely that '*every man*, praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.' . . . 'A man ought not to cover his head.' . . . 'If any man seem to be contentious, *we* have no such custom, *neither* the churches of God'? (1 Cor. xi. 4, 7, 16.) Certainly, the synagogues in that day were the congregations, if any, that would be called ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ, in distinction from those Christian congregations, in which Gentiles worshipped.

Liturgy, I find that it is not read as a Haphtarah in that morning service, although it is found there among several other strictly appropriate Scriptures, which make up one of the most beautiful services that can be imagined apart from Christianity. The Haphtarahs were appointed in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and it is not conceivable that if this were appointed for the Feast of Weeks it should have been universally omitted without any observation from a strict Pharisee, from a scrupulous and dissentient Karaite, or from a watchful Christian. The omission certainly could not have been made in the day of Justin Martyr, or he would have censured it in his great controversy with Tryphon; or, if it were still read in the synagogues on that day, he would almost as certainly have mentioned such a circumstance, but he makes no allusion of the sort.[1] The Karaites would not have quoted the prophecy after St. Peter without also yielding to the Pentecostal evidence, and accepting 'the powerful argument of the Divine nature of those transactions' which was really supplied when the promise of the Father was fulfilled, and the wonders of that day convinced three thousand Jews, and all without any one hint from St. Luke that conviction had been in any degree aided by the felicitous coincidence of a Haphtarah.

Dr. Henderson, for a moment at least, thought that the synagogue at Lutzk more nearly resembled a place of primitive Christian worship than the synagogues of any of the other principal sections of Judaism.

Nearly two hours were spent in repeating prayers and reading passages out of the Psalms and the Prophets, and it is certain that the very special service for that morning could not have been properly performed in any shorter time. It covers more than thirty full and compact quarto pages.

[1] Just. Mart., *Dial. Tryph.* cap. 87.

At length they came to that part of the service which is preparatory to the manifestation of the Law. This, in fact, is an entirely distinct solemnity, and is appointed, in the Liturgy before me, under a distinct direction that it may be performed or not as shall be thought right, and it is obvious that, to people in a country exposed to the vicissitudes of frequent war, and themselves liable to the disturbance of persecution, such discretion was necessary. It is called 'The Service of the Weeks.' It consisted, as he rightly says, chiefly of prayers, offered with great apparent earnestness, the whole congregation lifting up their hands, and raising their voices high, as they consider the Law requires them to do.

The Ark was then opened, and the Roll of the Law brought out with the utmost reverence, and placed endwise on the 'Table of Testimony.' A crown of gold was laid on the boss, or, as the Romans would say, the *umbilicus* of the roll, and in the top of the crown sparkled a precious stone of great brilliancy and exceeding price. Small silver tablets were hung around the sacred object. So did the worshippers in this humble tabernacle pay honour to THE LAW. Having for a moment regarded it with apparently intense and fond admiration, they pressed forward to pay their homage through that visible pledge of God's supreme authority, as do the more favoured subjects of a king when they approach to signify their loyal fealty and devotion by a kiss. This done, the costly embroidered silks in which the roll was wrapped when laid within the ark were permitted to be taken by three boys, and carried on their extended arms into the 'court of the women,' who also give their sign of allegiance in a secondary sense by raising the costly wrappings to their eyes and kissing them, as the men had kissed the roll itself.

' ואולם אם רצון לעשות חזנות רל להוציא ספר תורה יתחאיל כלם:

The roll being now laid on the table of testimony, the *Kházan*, or minister, thus addressed the officiating Rabbi:—'Thou, therefore, my father, O priest, crown of my head, give glory to the Law, and approach to read in the book of the Law; approach with reverence.' On this the congregation, as required by the rubric, recited in Hebrew the Divine promise to Phinehas: 'Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of Israel.' (Num. xxv. 12, 13.) Then these words of Ezra in Chaldee:—'And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of the house of God with joy.' (Ezra vi. 16.)

Having repeated a few sentences from the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, the Rabbi read a lesson from the Law, beginning at Exodus xix. 1, relating to the giving of the Law on Sinai, and after the lesson recited the words of David the son of Jesse:—'Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen.' (Psalm lxxii. 18, 19.)

The minister, turning to a young man who stood by, said,—'And thou, my brother, O Levite, give glory to the Law, and approach to read in the Book of the Law; approach with reverence.' To this the congregation gave their appointed response: 'And of Levi He said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah.' (Deut. xxxiii. 8.) The Levite then came forward, repeated several passages from the Psalms, Job, and Book of Proverbs, and read

some more verses, concluding with 'Blessed be the Lord God, and blessed be His holy Name for ever.' The rest of this lesson was read by members of the congregation, who were each in like manner summoned by the minister, with the words, 'And thou, my brother, O Israelite, give glory to the Law; approach with reverence.'

Having read to the commencement of Exodus xx., the whole congregation stood for some time in silence.

Here the rubric directs a peculiar observance. '*And then,*' it says, '*thou shalt say the whole Ten Commandments; and the people shall say the same, every one of them, sentence by sentence, in the language of the country.*'[1] So instructed, the Rabbi recited the First Commandment, after which the congregation repeated it in Tartar, word by word, and so they alternated, Rabbi and congregation, until the last word of the Tenth was solemnly pronounced. Then was read the concluding portion of the chapter.

The minister now turned to a fine boy, about thirteen years old, and addressed him thus: 'And thou, my son, O my *maphtir*,[2] give glory to the Law; draw near to read the Haphtarah, draw near with reverence.' The whole congregation followed up the summons with one voice: 'Hear, my son, the instruction of thy father, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.' The boy then approached as he was bidden, reverently, and, with amazing beauty and pathos, read in Hebrew the prayer of Habakkuk the Prophet upon Shigionoth.

Then followed the recitation by the whole congregation of what Dr. Henderson understood to be a long

[1] ויתאמר כל עשרת הדברים והעם יאמרו בכל פסוק ופסוק בלשון לעז׃

[2] This word, as literally translated by Dr. Henderson, might be 'dismisser,' but that is not its meaning here. מפטיר is reader of the הפטרה, the lesson from the Prophets.

metrical hymn. It was indeed long, and it was metrical —the six hundred and thirteen precepts, positive and negative, in verse. Short verses, it is true, but a long composition. A few moments followed in silence, for mental prayer.

Meanwhile the Law was restored to its place with great solemnity, and when the veil had fallen again before the Ark, the Rabbi raised his voice with inimitable solemnity, and uttered the words of the great commandment: 'Hear, O Israel; the LORD thy God is one LORD;' or, as Dr. Henderson writes it, 'Jehovah thy Elohim is one Jehovah.' Every breath was hushed. Every head was bowed down, as if it were in holy fear, and prayer itself was lost in death-like silence.

The service is evidently so ordered as to fill the day; for by this time, according to the rubric, '*The sun is near to its going down. The congregation gather themselves together in the synagogue, and are reading in the Book of Ruth, and this is the preface to it,*—And thou Bethlehem Ephratah, &c.'

So they closed the day, reading in silence until the sun had sunk into the west, when the congregation slowly withdrew, the women having gone before. The men and boys put on their shoes in the outer court where they had left them, and proceeded homewards with great decorum.[1] Aided by the same Liturgy that served the Doctor to refresh his memory, as a comparison of the two books assures me he must have done, I have presumed slightly to revise and to enlarge considerably. We will now proceed to gather some concurrent information from the pen of a German, already quoted, who followed our countryman after an interval of twenty years.

M. Kohl, who visited Kalè in the Crimea in 1841,

[1] Henderson's *Biblical Researches in Russia*, chap. xiv.

attended the principal synagogue in the Karaite colony, and witnessed a service on one of their great festivals. Unlike his reverend predecessor at Lutzk, he watched the congregation rather than the worship, scanning every object with the eye of an educated and keenly observant traveller. He describes the interior of this building as very like that of a mosque, except that it has a gallery for women, which a mosque has not. The area beyond the gallery was quite clear of seats, and well carpeted. The congregation had a Tartar-like appearance in physiognomy as well as in costume, so much so that he suspected a mixture of Tartar blood and Tartar habits.[1] All entered barefoot. They kept the foot when they went into the house of God.

Either M. Kohl was in a very genial mood, or the Crimean Karaites are a very pleasant people, dwelling happily in that favoured settlement. He says that they, like the Turks and Tartars, have an unbounded affection for their children, whom they are always kissing and caressing, playing with them even in the synagogue. The merry little creatures semed to be amusing themselves right well on the pretty parti-coloured carpet, or they lay with their heads in their fathers' bosoms, coaxing them. Sometimes a father, laying aside his book, drew the little fellow closer to him with a smile, chid him for not being so quiet as he should be, and then comforted the young transgressor with many kisses. Little fondlings, having patiently fasted for eighteen hours, fell asleep with weariness and hunger in their fathers' bosoms, who went on reading perseveringly over their children's heads. As the sun declined towards the

[1] This is not unlikely. It will be remembered how Karaite writers comment on the horror of the old Pharisees at marriages with Gentile women, or women defiled by the society of Gentiles, and quote against them the example of Moses and others who married Gentile women.

horizon, the men all drew closer to the windows, and they who stood hindermost held up their books above the heads of those who stood before them, to catch the last beams of the departing light, if so they might make out the shape of the letters, and strike up again the last words of the evensong wherewith to close the day. After all, when the supply of daylight was exhausted, and the room darkened rapidly, when they felt that the service was completely done, and the Law sufficiently kept, the men began to disperse slowly, each with a child in his hand, but no one with wife on arm, and thus they went home. They had fulfilled the rubric at the dipping of the sun. They measured the day as Moses did, and Adam before Moses, not by artificial computation, but by the light that shone.

'I had heard,' says M. Kohl, 'that when the Karaites go to prayer, they turn exactly in the opposite direction to that taken by the Jews. That would indeed be giving a pretty strong sign of aversion to their ancient brethren. "Have you still any hope of a Messiah?" I once asked a Karaite in Odessa, who was displaying his stallful of Persian and Turkish silken goods, and also giving me a lecture concerning his sect. "Yes, indeed we have," said he. "We are looking for Him continually, day and night. He may come in a few days, perhaps even to-morrow, or He may even come to-day. Yes! it may be that He is here already, and we know it not." "To-morrow is the Sabbath," said a poor wrinkled old woman, a Talmudist, who had her little stall, full of thread and tapes, just outside the Karaite's door; "and if the Messiah were to come to-morrow, hurrah! would not I give Him all my dinner!" "Now, old lady," I remarked, "you may be sure He will have no need of anything that you can give Him." "Oh, no!" cried the old Karaite, "that's not necessary, but it is He that will have to give us all we stand in need of." "Ah!

great God!" muttered the poor old woman, "then He will have to give *me much!*" "Then," I asked, "will He give peace and friendship to abide between you Jews and the Karaites?" To this question of mine they neither of them answered a word, ungracious beings that they are!'[1]

This little tale is told so artistically that one might think it made for the occasion, but it is full of nature, and serves well to convey to the reader the impression received in the writer's mind after intercourse with both classes of Jews in Russia.

The Karaites are comparatively wealthy, at least, and so contented in their prosperity as willingly to remain where they are. They expect the Messiah, They expect Him daily. They think He may come any day. So well off are they as almost to fancy that He is there already. The Talmudists, on the contrary, are but poor, far unlike their wealthy brethren in many other countries, and therefore they would gladly hope if they could, but they can hope no longer. Some of them, like the rest of the world, are careless through prosperity, and others are stupefied and hardened through adversity. Nothing but the true advent of the Saviour, that advent which brings Him near with the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost, can possibly bring tenderness of conscience into their bosoms, and impart to any of them steadfast peace, unfailing hope, and faith triumphant over all the ills of life.

The French reports that were collected in 1855 add a little to our stock of information. They tell us that the Crimean Karaites observe the thirteen rules of interpretation laid down by Rabbi Ishmael early in the second century, and a comparison of these rules, which are easy to be found, with the principles or canons of interpretation

[1] *Reisen in Sudrüssenland* von J. C. Kohl. Dresden und Leipzig, 1841, Zweiter Theil. Nachtragliches über die Karaïten.

laid down by Rabbi Aaron in his 'Crown of the Law,' which will be quoted in another chapter, confirms the statement. But while the Karaites apply these rules—or *profess* to apply them—to the whole code of Mosaic laws, without excepting any part of that code, do not other Jews acknowledge that they expound only '*the greatest part* of the precepts of the Levitical Law by means of these rules'?[1] These Karaites also agree with the Rabbanites in practising *the way of killing meat*, שחיטה, so that no blood remains in it, and even teach it to their children. The women are held exempt from observing such portions of the Law as only mention *men* or *sons*. They do not compel married women to shave their heads, which they think it would be wrong to do, agreeing with St. Paul that 'it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven,' and that 'long hair is a glory to her,' and also agreeing with the Law of Moses. Their sermons are in Tartar. Their prayers are long, but they do not sing. The minister begins the service if there are three persons present, not waiting for ten, as do the Rabbanites; and here, again, they agree with a gracious saying of our Lord Himself, who promised His presence and blessing even to two or three gathered together in His name. They pray in the synagogue twice a day, not three times, like the others. It is said—but this does not agree with Dr. Henderson's account, nor is it likely to be true—that they do not wear the fringes in the synagogue, but have a strip of cloth hung up there, on which they look when reciting the words of the *Shemá*. It is also said that they name their children at birth, whether sons or daughters, and do not wait for circumcision, which they perform on their boys when eight days old. In this particular they have deteriorated. The Jewish practice,

[1] See David Levi's *Notes and Illustrations on the Spanish and Portuguese Form of Prayers*. London, A.M. 5549, page 4.

which we follow in respect to baptism, was to associate the naming with a sacred rite.

They have a society, say the reporters, called 'the Holy Society,' which has care of all burials, and sees that they do not take place until eighteen or twenty days after death, a delay which appears incredible. They say that when the time for burial arrives the corpse is laid on a bier, and so carried to the cemetery, men only following. The procession moves on slowly, in profound silence, except when silence is broken by the chanting or intoning a psalm of prayer. On reaching the cemetery they lay the corpse in the grave on its back, with the head towards the north, and feet to the south. A little dust, brought from the Holy Land by some pilgrim, is laid on the closed eyelids. The grave is filled with earth, and the followers disperse. For a week friends pay daily visits of condolence to the family, with whom they offer prayer. As in the time of the Maccabees, they pray for the souls of the departed; and here they are not unfairly taunted with retaining a superstition which has no sanction whatever in the Law of Moses.

CHAPTER XVII.

PRESENT STATE OF SOME KARAITE SETTLEMENTS, ETC.

OUR last chapter was devoted to peculiarities of synagogue-worship and religious observance in general in Russia. Attention will now be given, for a few pages, to the social state and position of this people at present on the same ground. The Crimea still retains its interest.

Dr. Henderson visited Djufut-Kalè in 1821, and we return to his account of the visit. "Like other visitors, he was very hospitably welcomed by the Chief Rabbi, who showed him a good library, containing, among other volumes, of which he preserved no account, the Talmud. There were several commentaries of the Law, said to be written by Karaites, and some on other portions of the Old Testament. Each of the two synagogues was well supplied with Hebrew Bibles and Prayer-books, and copies of the Judæo-Tartar version of the Bible were in use by the congregation."

Above 250 families, exclusively Karaite, dwelt within the walls, all being engaged in trade. Some of the people went to business every morning in Baghtchisarai, and returned in the evening. Some travelled into Russia and Poland as traders, and some took voyages to Odessa. They had shops, or branch establishments, in the several commercial centres. Members of their families being consequently resident in all those places, and precluded

by the strict rules of their religion from intimate relation with even other Jews, they must have congregated everywhere in sufficient numbers to carry on a kind of domestic commerce among themselves, and to have their own synagogues.

Behind the town, in a beautiful valley or depressed plain, sheltered by surrounding hills, is the resting-place of their dead; an ancient cemetery, with tombstones having inscriptions legible after exposure to the weather of that fitful and tempestuous climate during, as they said, five hundred years; but later information proves that that date was altogether underrated, and that inscriptions were to be found, whether above ground or buried, dated 1,500 years or more before the Doctor's visit. They called that cemetery the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Kalè still enjoyed privileges granted by the Khan of the Crimea, Hadji Selim Gherei, about the middle of the eighteenth century, in consequence of the cure of his sister, who was recovered from a dangerous illness by the successful treatment of one of their physicians. By virtue of this grant, the gates of the city and fort were closed on the Sabbath-days, that is to say, from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, in strict conformity with the ordinance of Nehemiah (xiii. 19). In all respects they obeyed the Divine injunction, conveyed in the words of Isaiah (lviii. 13, 14), and were rewarded with a literal fulfilment of the promise, if no more: 'If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; . . . then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father.' In their practical recognition of the sanctity of the Sabbatic institution, they were described by this visitor as very superior to the Russian Jews in general, who convert the day into a season of mere

sensuous delight, with feasting and conviviality. The favourable impression Dr. Henderson received of them during his tour in Russia cannot be so well communicated to the reader in any other words than his own, which I copy without the slightest alteration:—

'The Karaites are free from many of the superstitions to be found among the Jews in general, such as the transmigration of souls, the power of talismans, &c.; and, as might naturally be expected from their principles, the standard and tone of morals which their general deportment exhibits is quite of a different stamp from that of the Rabbanists. In their persons they are tidy; their domestic discipline and arrangements are correct and exemplary, and their dealings with others are characterised by probity and integrity. It is one of their favourite maxims that those things which a man is not willing to receive himself, it is not right for him to do to his brethren—a maxim strictly corresponding with Matt. vii. 12. How far the Karaites act up to this principle may be ascertained by the fact that they are universally respected by all who know them; and I never yet heard any person speak ill of them, except he was a bigoted adherent of the Talmud. In the south of Russia, where they are best known, their conduct is proverbial, and I cannot place it in a stronger light than by recording the testimony borne to it by a Polish gentleman in Dubno, who informed me that, while the other Jews resident in Lutzk are constantly embroiled in suits at law, and require the utmost vigilance on the part of the police, there is not a single instance of prosecution recorded against the Karaites for the space of several hundred years, during which they have been settled in that place.

'In the time of R. Benjamin there existed between them and the Rabbanists in Constantinople a literal wall of separation (מחיצה), and I was struck, when visiting

them at Lutzk, to find that they lived in a separate quarter of the town, altogether distinct from the other Jews, who never spoke of them without contumely; and they even declared that, if they saw a Christian in danger of being drowned, it would be their duty to make a bridge of the Karaite in order to rescue him. In short, they carry their enmity to such a pitch that they will not receive a Karaite into their communion until he has previously made a profession of the Mohammedan or Christian faith. The Karaites, on the contrary, though they execrate the traditions of the Rabbanists, never speak of their persons with contempt, but commonly give them the fraternal appellation אחינו הרבנים, *our brothers the Rabbanim.*'[1]

During the last war with Russia, when the combined forces of Turkey, England, and France were in the Crimea, and some Jews in Paris obtained the friendly assistance of the French military authorities for instituting inquiries concerning the state of their Karaite brethren in that peninsula, their chief attention was directed to the ancient city of Djufut-Kalè, then suffering much in consequence of the war. The 250 families were reduced to 100, if, indeed, the 300 old men, widows, and children that remained after the able-bodied men and younger women had fled could be clustered into the shape of families. There were only two principal persons remaining. One was Benjamin Aga, Prince of the Karaites, who had his residence there, and had formerly received the Emperor Joseph of Austria and the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia. The other was Rabbi Beym, who sustained the twofold dignity of civil governor and Chief Rabbi, being about forty-five years of age, and well educated, speaking Hebrew and German besides his

[1] Henderson's *Biblical Researches in Russia*, &c., chap. xiv.

vernacular Tartar. Alexander I., Nicholas, Alexander Nicholaiwitch, the Empress, and some Imperial Highnesses had been his guests, and all accounts concur in representing him as well able to receive his numerous visitors of rank with courteous hospitality.

The French inquirers found the ancient place exactly as Dr. Henderson had described it—seated on a calcareous rock, 2,000 feet above the level of the sea, and consisting of humble habitations sufficient for 3,000 inhabitants, of whom only about a third were ordinarily present. They were informed that the aged, having accumulated wealth as travelling merchants in Russia for the most part, or in Constantinople, or in Egypt, usually came back to spend their last days in the only city in the world that is exclusively their own. It is their Jerusalem. There they endeavour to assimilate their religious services to those of the old Jerusalem, in the time of the second Temple, and, so far as that can be lawfully attempted, they approach to a resemblance. A fruitful hill, which rises boldly from the level of the table-land behind the little city, is to them a Mount of Olives. A deep ravine below reminds them of Kedron. Their vast cemetery, magnificently solemn, city of their slumbering dead, with its 40,000 tombs at the surface, resting on layers of tombs beneath the surface, substructed, as it were, floor under floor, each chamber with its tenant irremovable until the day when the trumpet shall awake them all, wonderfully strengthens the resemblance to that holy city, with its yet more ancient Valley of Jehoshaphat, which very name it borrows. There, as is now reported, may be seen the tomb of that zealous propagandist, the Rabbanite Isaac Sangari, who converted the Chozar king to the religion of the Talmud, to whose body their fathers did not refuse a grave.

Rabbi Beym, who sent a written account of these

matters to the *Capitaine d'état major, Perrotin,* which was forwarded to M. Cahen, editor of the *Archives Israelites,* and inserted in a number of that periodical of the year 1856, says that the date on this tomb is A.M. 5761, or A.D. 766. If this inscription can be examined, and with its date be verified, it will lend an invaluable confirmation to the statements contained in the Book of Chozri concerning the Karaites then dwelling in Chozar.

Beneath the ark in the synagogue, which is a building of high antiquity, there had been found a parchment roll of the Prophets, supposed to be at least a thousand years old; but it was sent to the Antiquarian Society of Odessa, and deposited in their library, where we must hope that it will be guarded with sacred care.[1] In ages past there were other synagogues in the Crimean hills, and others in the plains, respectively called the *high* synagogues and the *low.* One in Kalé itself was known as the Chozar synagogue, no doubt because it belonged to those very Karaites of whom honourable mention is made in the book already quoted in these pages. The members of that congregation were benefactors to the ancient synagogue now visited, as appears by the subscription to a manuscript of the Pentateuch: '*This Law is complete and just.*[2] *It has been set apart for the synagogue by the sons of the Society of Solchat, by the sons of the Society of Chozar, and by the sons of the Low Society,*' &c. &c.

Close by the synagogue is another building, called the Holy House, used as a house of prayer. It serves to receive the surplus congregation when the synagogue is overfilled, and it is also used for meetings to deliberate

[1] It is indeed so to be hoped. But a facsimile of the Roll, taken skilfully, would be an imperial gift to the learned of the whole world, of inestimable value.

[2] That is to say, accurately written.

on questions relating to administration of the Law of Moses, or on other matters of religion. In any place where there is no such Holy House, the peristyle, or court of the synagogue, is used for this purpose.

This leads to the mention of Eupatoria. A description of a Karaite synagogue in that city, said to have been founded in the eleventh century by a lineal descendant of Ahnan, is quoted from the *Moniteur* of Jan. 28, 1855. It has a spacious open court, surrounded with a covered gallery of stone, garnished with inscriptions and paintings by Byzantine artists, and in the centre is a monument of white marble, erected by the Emperor Nicholas of Russia to the memory of his brother Alexander. At the further end of this gallery is a small court, of which the walls are faced with stone covered with inscriptions and paintings. Into one side of this court opens the men's synagogue, and into the other the women's, both being rich. The relic which, above everything else, formerly distinguished this building was a Bible therein deposited. By 'Bible' we are probably to understand a copy of the Five Books of Moses. They say that it is a manuscript of the eighth century, and belonged to Ahnan himself. It is an object of veneration to the Israelites. Most of the wealthy Jewish families had left the city on the commencement of hostilities with Turkey; but some Jews in the French army, who visited the synagogue, regarded it as an evidence of the importance of the Karaite portion of the population, while the choice of its stately gallery for the erection of an Imperial monument proves that they have been favoured, not only by the native Khans of the Crimea, but by the Czars and Court of Russia.

When the armies of the Empress Katharine first came into that part of the Russian dominions, all the wealth and commerce of the country was in the hands of the Karaites, who declared for the Russians, and found them great

resources. From that time their prosperity has constantly augmented.

After the synagogue, the *Moniteur* correspondent mentions the Karaite cemetery of Eupatoria, and calls it the finest Israelite cemetery in the whole world. It contains, he says, a countless multitude of monolith tombs of marble, granite, or other hard stone, of monumental form, and covered with very curious inscriptions. Among the epitaphs is one that records the death of a skilful and patient scribe, who departed this life at the age of nearly a hundred years, towards the close of the sixteenth century. A parchment roll, in length about one kilomètre, covered with the Holy Scripture of the entire Old Testament, written with exquisite accuracy and beauty, was the work of his life, and remains here to testify his love of the one Book which the Karaites deem sufficient for a right understanding of the Law of God.

The time for such laborious caligraphy must now be past; for, except synagogue-rolls, and perhaps not even excepting them, the press can supply Jew or Gentile with anything he wishes to read. But for nearly 400 years after the introduction of printing into Europe, the Karaites had no means of printing a religious book, or next to none. Partly from Oriental prejudice, and partly from poverty, they depended on scribes for the very little reading that was known among them. Or, when urged by necessity, they employed a Christian printer, fearing to entrust the Jewish compositors who laboured at the Hebrew presses to set up type for them, lest in ignorance or ill-will they should spoil the work. At length, however, there were some symptoms of intellectual awakening, and then printing was sure to follow.

Early in the present century some of them added their names to the list of authors. Such were Isaac, son of Solomon, physician, mathematician, and Rabbi in Kalè; Joseph Solomon, son of Moses in Jerusalem, a Rabbi in

Cherson and Koslov; Mordechai, son of Solomon Koso, also Rabbi at Kalè; Abraham Firkowitsch from Lutzk, latterly Rabbi in Cherson and Koslov;—Joseph, son of Jacob Schachangi, Rabbi in the Crimea; Shalom, Rabbi in Halitsch; Elijah, son of Moses, Rabbi in Cairo. These employed their authorly activity between the years of 1800 and 1825.

But the means of diffusing literature by a press of their own was utterly wanting, until at length, in the year 1825, an earnest longing sprang up among the Crimean Karaites to erect a large printing establishment, which might not only be available for the circulation of new works, dating in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but for the republication of ancient Karaite books of larger size. The men in whose bosoms the glow of literary ambition was now felt mourned for the immeasurable and stubborn ignorance that brooded like a shadow of death over their communities; an apathy, nay, an aversion, which they bravely resisted until it gave way, and began to be dispelled.

Experience had taught them something. In the year 1805 a first attempt was made in Kalè with a printing office, of which the chief remaining evidence is the Liturgy in three volumes, which I have elsewhere noted, printed in 1806. It appears to have been clumsily put out of hand by unpractised workmen, with poor material of various quality, and niggardly supplied paper, variously tinged with brown and blue; dirty type. So indeed it was, and the enterprise, failing for lack of heart and funds, came to a stand. The later effort was more successful. The Sons of the Reading now compared their failure with the typographical successes of their more superstitious brethren, the Talmudists, and, wisely resolving not to be outdone a second time, established a permanent printing office in Eupatoria.

Abraham Firkowitsch, then in the vigour of his earlier manhood, being resident there, was the mainspring of the new movement. He undertook to carry out the plan of printing some works of established name and literary value, such as the 'Addereth' of Elijah Batschiatski, and the 'Mibkhar' of Aaron, son of Joseph. Wealthy Karaites, seeing that the work would be in good hands, contributed large sums of money to the erection of a suitable building, with what our tradesmen would call a sufficient 'plant.' They proved that, amidst the rudeness and apparent poverty of that region, there was much latent intelligence, and that the enterprise, hitherto exercised in commerce, could also be engaged in art. They were moreover persuaded that, under sufficient guarantees, the projected establishment would be sustained with public confidence, and become remunerative to its conductors.

Pecuniary contributions flowed in freely from Eupatoria and the neighbourhood, from Cherson, Kalè, and other places in the Crimea. Help also came, but on a smaller scale, from Constantinople, Kafa, Lutzk, and Jorok. The contributors, for the most part, subscribed their names as 'friends' or 'benefactors to the holy work.' It was not a mere feat of pride, but it became a work of religion and patriotism too, for although the contributors were members of a boundless dispersion, and of an obscure people who had but one little castle-city on a hill-top in the wilderness that they could boast of calling their own, they felt now as if they had discovered a uniting link—had found almost a country for themselves. From the time that they first set about their work in Eupatoria, the printers were never idle. The books first printed were chiefly religious, if not altogether so, and unless the subscriptions of *benefactors* and *friends* were merely formal, which is not to be suspected, unless their

professions were insincere, their bounty illusory, and their lavishment of gold reckless extravagance, all which is incredible, there was a fresh awakening of religious sentiment, and right means were taken to diffuse widely, among their brethren of both rites, a more sound principle of sacred study.[1]

Having seen the press fairly established in the Crimea, under the protection of the Russian Government, Firkowitsch found that yet another great work remained for him to accomplish. He had been educated in Eupatoria, and there enjoyed the use of the manuscript library belonging to the Karaite congregation; but while he experienced the delight and advantage of access to the books, he also became sensible of having but a scant supply. He read of many works which his authors mentioned, and which he, too, would fain have studied; but they were far away beyond reach, most of them beyond knowledge. Impelled by his own thirst for learning, and yet more powerfully moved by a noble desire to revive Hebrew literature for the benefit of his brethren, he travelled into many distant countries, and sought out the scattered Karaite communities in Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Palestine, Persia and the Caucasus, not shunning any danger or privation, but encouraged by general sympathy, the sympathy not of Karaites only, but of Rabbanites as well, as of Jews who, remembering their common lineage, gave him fraternal welcome and ungrudging help in the prosecution of his labours in a field hitherto untrodden.

Firkowitsch soon met with success exceeding all his hopes. He penetrated into the very depths of Asiatic wildernesses, searching wherever he might hope to find a fragment of Karaite antiquity, even in the smallest

[1] Fürst, *Gesch. Kar.* x. 10–13.

settlements of his long-neglected brethren; and when he found those brethren stupefied with hereditary, yet involuntary ignorance, he rested not until he had aroused them to at least a consciousness of ignorance, if he could not altogether drag them out of the intellectual torpidity which is inseparable from the solitude and isolation of the like small societies. He made them hear, if it was but for once, something about the history and the ancient literature of their own people. Hearing of him what he came seeking after, many employed themselves as helpers in the search. From all corners of the far-distant East he gathered Rolls of the Law, and other manuscripts that for ages were not imagined to exist, having ceased to be legible even to their possessors. Entire books or mutilated manuscripts were brought out of hiding-places previously unexplored; some of high antiquity, and in excellent preservation; others faded, and rotting in tattered fragments. All were greedily packed up together to be deciphered, if that were possible, at leisure. Some he bought, some were freely given to him in admiration of his enthusiastic devotedness to the welfare of the Karaite congregations, now to be informed of their heaven-ennobled ancestry, and of the faith and the learning which distinguished many of their fathers, and might be now recovered for themselves, even as a rich inheritance, secretly held for them by an unseen power, to be in reversion theirs.

His keen eye discovered and deciphered inscriptions in broken or abraded marbles, that the showers and frosts of ages had nearly obliterated. In Jerusalem, in a cellar, under the old Karaite synagogue, he found precious manuscripts. At Gura, near Damascus, where the Karaites were dwelling, as usual, in a separate community, but where also, not as usual, war and persecution had somewhat spared them, and a portion of their ancient

library yet remained, there he found priceless treasures, and not even he, with all his experience, was able to appreciate their value.

So he persevered for many years, and was all the time bringing home loads of literary wealth, and submitting them to the studious examination of Abraham, son of Rabbi Shemuel Pinsker in Odessa, whose constantly growing accumulation of printed documents for the future historians of Karaism exhibits some small portion of the treasure put by himself into a legible form, to be hereafter collated, arranged, and transfused into the shape of history, for which the confused heap has not yet yielded material enough.

Thus is Russia rewarded for its wise hospitality to our Karaite brethren, by the possession of those Firkowitsch manuscripts in the Imperial Library of St. Petersburg; and although his labours and their ample fruits have not yet been so noised abroad in Europe as their intrinsic value merits, there can be no doubt that they are the material for a new literature that will benefit the world, and will probably invite Christian students back into tracts of thought too long deserted, and—let us delight to hope it—help both Karaites and Rabbanites to search successfully the Law and the Prophets, which testify of Christ.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RABBI AARON, SON OF ELIJAH.[1]

His Exposition of Karaite Principles.

LET it not be thought that in borrowing an account of the great reverence paid to the Book of the Law in the synagogue at Lutzk, I wish to convey the idea that the Talmudist Jews do not pay the like reverence to the same sacred object, for that they do, and perhaps it would be difficult to discover any difference between the solemnities of some Ḳaraite and some Talmudist congregations on occasion of the manifestation of the Law. A Christian, however, who has not had the opportunity of making actual comparison, may be permitted to believe that while the Jew, in general, pays a more superstitious honour to the parchment and the writing on it, the Karaite, in particular, dwells more devotedly on the holiness of the Law itself, as it is certain that, on other occasions, he insists on it more strenuously, and pursues a method of rational exposition of the text which is quite incompatible with superstitious veneration of any material object.

The differences in faith, ritual, and custom I have marked in preceding chapters, and will endeavour to finish my comparative survey by presenting an exposition of the principles of Karaite interpretation of the Law.

[1] Aaron the son of Elijah is to be distinguished from Aaron the son of Joseph, also a Karaite Rabbi and an author, but the elder by a generation.

For greater certainty, and unquestionably with greater ease, after a brief description of the author and his work, I will borrow the statements of Rabbi Aaron himself,[1] instead of attempting to elaborate any statement of my own.

This Rabbi was regarded amongst the Jews as the great religious philosopher of his age. He was born in Cairo about the year 1300, and there educated near the throne of the Karaite Patriarchate, and at the centre of Karaite learning in Egypt. When about thirty years old he went to Nicomedia, where he wrote many important works, and received the surname of Nicomedian. He is universally accepted as a first authority. He wrote his Commentary on the Pentateuch about the year 1362, and entitled it 'Crown of the Law.' Professor Kosegarten, of the University of Jena, extracted some portions of it from a manuscript in the library of his university, collated with another copy, and published it with a Latin version and learned notes. Rabbi Aaron, although a Karaite of uncompromising sincerity, was no bigot, and scrupled not to borrow his title from the Talmud, or rather from the Mishna, where we read how 'Ribbí Simeon said: There are three crowns—the crown of the Law, the crown of the priesthood, and the crown of the kingdom.'[2] The Gemára unfolds the idea beautifully by observing on this text that 'these three degrees of goodness were granted to the people of Israel in the beginning—namely, the Priesthood, the Kingdom, and the Law. The priesthood fell to Aaron, and the Kingdom to David, but the crown of the Law rests upon every one who chooses to crown himself therewith.' From the pen of a Talmudist, the title of this book

[1] *Libri Coronæ Legis; id est Commentarii in Pentateuchum Karaitici ab Aharone ben Elihu conscripti, aliquot particulas edidit atque Latine vertit.* G. L. Kosegarten: Jenæ, 1824.

[2] *Capita Patrum*, iv. 13.

would probably be made to mean traditional theology, but from that of a Scripturist it could only be the כתר תורה, 'Crown of the Law,' which is a crown to him that keeps God's Law. Rabbi Aaron limits its application to the Law itself, as written by Moses, and strenuously withholds it from even the most remote relation to that body of traditions which the Rabbanites untruly say was delivered by the Lord to Moses, by Moses to Aaron the High Priest, by Moses and Aaron to Eliezer and Ithamar, by these to the seventy elders, and from the elders conveyed down to us by an unbroken chain of masters continued even to this present day.

Rabbi Aaron was a close reasoner, profoundly versed in the grammar of his own language as preserved in the Old Testament, and as written by the Rabbis of the East, a master of Arabic, and conversant with the philosophy of the Alexandrian schools. He was familiar with Aristotle and Plato, often praising the latter, and, in spite of his rigid literalism, was conscious of the poetic spirit that breathes in the Oriental imagery. His Commentary is gently controversial, and, although the page at first glance threatens to be tediously minute in verbal criticism, the reader falls under the influence of an earnestly sincere intention which pervades every line, and is translucent through the technicalities of grammar, and the severity of metaphysics. He writes for the instruction of his readers, whom he ever sees before him.

Solicitous to impart clear information concerning his own faith, and the faith of his fathers, he declares in plain terms against the errors of both Jew and pagan.

Against Materialists and Sadducees.

First of all, he pronounces against an old and widely prevalent notion that the world has been from eternity, and professes his belief that God is the Author of all existence. Thus he gives a formal testimony to prove that, being a Karaite, he is not what

the enemy would wish to make him out to be, a Sadducee. So does the first article of our common faith stand at the very beginning of his work, where he says that 'it pleased God, who is high and lifted up, that the being which might be brought into existence should exist indeed. He therefore created a form separate from body, a form which, being separated from body (or matter), cannot perish with it; a form conjoined with body (or matter) which either adheres to it, or may be separated from it. That part which is separated from the body cannot altogether perish when the body perishes, but will itself survive, and endure for ever. This is the soul of man, and it is more sublime, because it has its birth from God, who sent it forth from the fountain of all unseen creation, and made it a perfect being by conjunction with the body. For there is a certain power and faculty which God produced from the fountain of wisdom and flood of intelligence, that it might walk in its own paths, and pursue its own course; that it might exist in truth, and endure as long as the Word that is made known to it shall endure, for the way of life tends upward.'

The soul of man.

Like those champions of Christianity who, a thousand years before, had armed themselves with weapons of Grecian philosophy wherewith to combat the sophistry of heretics, and employed the language of Greece to set forth more clearly to the Greeks the saving truth of our Lord's essential Godhead, so did this noble Hebrew proclaim the elementary truth of early revelation in the language of Arabia, and for the descendants of the Greek-speaking philosophers of Egypt, in the style most familiar to themselves. In that style he argued at once with those who made void God's Law by their traditions, and with those who denied the omnipotence of the Creator, and the immortality of man created in the

image of God. Let us now follow him as he defines the ground of controversy between the advocates of Talmudism and the believers in the single and supreme authority of Holy Scripture. The translation shall be as close as our English idiom will allow.

'It came to pass that the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. Then did the wisdom of the wise men perish, and the understanding of the prudent failed. They transgressed the Law; they changed the statutes; they made the ancient covenant of none effect; they forgat the Rock, even God their Redeemer. Therefore the Lord rooted them out of their land, and cast them into lands that were not their own in any of the places of their captivity. There were they forgetful of His Law, and no longer understood His counsels; but the people of Israel perished for lack of knowledge, and the commandments of His Law and the mysteries thereof were hidden from them. Vision is now sealed. Prophet and judge are now cut off. Revelations are no more accustomed. The eyes of the learned are dim when they try to search out the meaning of the Law. Truth fails, and dissension strengthens more and more until a multitude of doubtful and conflicting interpretations are heaped up on a single word. So do they separate into many ways, one saying this thing and another that, wandering far from the path of truth, and forsaking them that follow it.

Beginnings of error.

Consequences of error.

'At first they divided into two parties, each one far distant from the other.

'The *first* party consists of those who delight in all the words that are written in the Law, just as they hear them; but to the princes of the people this appears a great sin, and a confirmed rebellion. Some of those who thus follow the literal sense as their own judgment may determine, seem to be in the right at first, but

The simple way.

when the proof has to be established for them by one who maintains the literal sense strictly, then they are found to be of a different spirit.

'The *second* party consists of those who speak according to their own tradition. As for them, we perceive that God is present in their mouths, indeed, but far distant from their thoughts. Even while they take the words altogether in their literal meaning, without parable or figure, they learn their religion only from the commandments of men. Hence it comes to pass that in their discordant interpretations they all miss the mark, go far astray from the faith and from the intention of the Scriptures. Setting at nought the art of interpretation and the rules of grammar, they tread in the bypaths of their own private interpretation of the precepts of God's Law. Resting in their own particular traditions, they now add texts, and now take texts away, but their ears are never satisfied with hearing. Then there arises great contention concerning God's commandments between the masters of tradition and the masters of the text. The masters of the text follow the words according to their grammatical form and their collective meaning. The others cling to their tradition, with this voice of delusion ever sounding in their ears: "*A decision of Moses from Sinai.*" But that voice speaks a word which the Lord has never spoken.

The way of tradition.

'Some, when a passage has to be determined by their judgment, and the literal sense offends them, set it down at once as figurative. Some give their assent to the teaching of strangers, and affirm as articles of belief opinions that are contrary to the Law, and these opinions they hold stubbornly, until, at length, you may hear them endeavouring to enforce some heathen doctrine as if it were a sacred truth, and doing so as if it were with the sanction of the Law of God itself. "But affliction

shall not rise up the second time." (Nahum i. 9.) Such persons shall be punished at once, without any necessity for a second stroke.

'Whatever passage they see in Scripture that contradicts their own decision, they at once assert that the Law really speaks in their own sense, and with but apparent adaptation to the understanding of the vulgar, who take it in another sense. But I find it said concerning people of this kind, "Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." (Jer. ii. 35.) Thus do the leaders of these people cause them to err, and they who are led by them perish, and of this poor self-sown sect, whose hearts are full of the vain thoughts that spring up within themselves, every one goes out of the way; and even when there is no need to go beyond the literal sense, they do go astray every one of them, just as his fancy leads him, and they propagate their lies and spread their insolence by way of parable and flourishing of words. Even so do the ploughers plough in vain, and make long the furrows, speaking against the Lord in the very words that were spoken by the mouth of the Almighty. So do they abuse the very commandments and writings of that Law which gives good understanding to them that keep it. It was thus that the children of Israel did things that were not right against the Lord their God, and their way was evil, and they darkened the honour of the Law, obscured its glory, and quenched its light. Yet is its excellence now manifest, and the knowledge of true faith therein is altogether lovely, for every sentence written in the book of the Law is immovably certain, and instructs us in some of the established principles of our faith. Every commandment is profitable to them that receive it, and gives them a good understanding. Pleasant words are as a honeycomb, to give them peace, with the reward of eternal life, when their soul shall come into the hand of

the Lord that judgeth. "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."'

All this is directed against what our Karaite calls a *self-sown sect*,—a sect of persons who do not receive the Talmud, but, on the contrary, call themselves masters of the text, profess to understand the meaning of the text by virtue of a tradition or learning of their own, but exercise their private judgment so recklessly and so proudly that, unawares to themselves, they wander into heathenism, and are no less guilty than the wildest followers of the worst parts of the Talmud. This we must accept as history, and should profit by it, too well knowing that the self-sufficiency of multitudes on every side is at this day leading them into the same snare. I fear the same sin of trusting to our own understanding grows worse and worse among ourselves, and that this wretched abuse of the liberty for which all must answer at the judgment-seat of Christ is now making wreck of the conscience and the faith of thousands.

This deterioration of Karaism, by an excessive dependence upon private judgment, must be taken into account before everything else, when we would investigate the cause of the dispersion of Karaite synagogues, and the decline of that people, in spite of the just principle that gave them birth, their self-sufficiency bringing them to the very verge of utter extinction. Persecution would never have so scattered them, but for some internal weakness, and here we detect it. It is the self-sufficiency of ignorance. Persecution could not minish the numbers of Israel in Egypt. Persecution could not crush them in Syria, in the time of Antiochus and the Maccabees. Not all the massacres of every age and in every land could extirpate the Jews, Talmudists though they were, but self-sufficiency had nearly annihilated the synagogues of Karaism. Let this be for the instruction of us Protestant Christians.

Now to return. R. Aaron continues thus:—

'I perceive that the intention of the Law is directed to two objects: one is the benefit of the body, and the other is the benefit of the soul, and these are closely related to each other. The Law of God benefits the soul because it comprehends all doctrines, and contains all that wisdom which imparts perfection to the soul, and puts far away all doctrine that would promote falsehood by concealing truth. It benefits the body by giving it dignity through habits of sobriety and self-control, putting away all dishonesty. There is a virtue in every sentence of God's written Law, in every precept tending to the fulfilment thereof, that also tends to the perfection both of soul and body. All contributes to the same end, to perfect instruction in the same truth, and to fear of the same God; and therefore, while these things are evidently reasonable, and profitable too, inasmuch as from them we have our hope and expectation, it is not fitting for us to turn aside out of the straight way, either to the right hand or to the left.

Intention of the Law.

'Besides this, the examples of history and the reasons of the commandment are closely united and interwoven in the Law, with the principle of the Divine Unity and the foundations of the Faith. For it is the Lord that gave it, and from His mouth proceed knowledge and understanding. In every place, therefore, where we have to teach by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, there let us abide firmly by the truth of their united evidence, and there let us search the Scripture itself,'—that is to say, all the writings of the Old Testament that follow the five Books of Moses,—'as that Scripture is sufficient to explain the Law according to its simple meaning, and let us beware of the masters of riddles and parables, so that we utter no impiety against the Lord.'

Truth and Faith united.

This condemnation of *riddles and parables* entirely

harmonises with a sentence of our Lord: 'Unto you,' the disciples, 'it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables,' the intention of their masters being 'that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.' (Luke viii. 10.) Quite contrary to a common principle of Karaism and the New Testament is the doctrine of the Rabbanites, as it is given by Maimonides in his preface to the Mishnah, where he tells of a certain learned man who refused to teach the sublime science of mysticism (*maáseh mercabah*) to some person who had consented to teach him natural science (*maáseh bereshith*), because he thought him unworthy to ascend the chariot of such exalted wisdom. He kept it, sweet as it was to his own taste, like honey and milk *under* his tongue (Song of Solomon iv. 11), according to the teaching of the Rabbis, who insist that this kind of wisdom is too precious to be taught in plain language, either in writing or by word of mouth. Such mysteries, they say, are hidden in the Bible under words too hard to be understood except by special revelation, for which, say they, David prayed when he besought the Lord to open his eyes that he might see wondrous things out of the Law. 'And when the Lord discovers to any one out of the Law that which it may please Him to reveal, the person so enlightened must conceal his knowledge, or, at the most, hint it only in obscure words to other persons of superior intellect.' For this they quote a proverb of Solomon, and Maimonides enforces the reserve because, as he insists, 'the common people can only be taught by riddles and parables, that so the teaching may be given in common to women, children, and infants, who may possibly come to discern the meaning at some future time, if they ever get sense enough to understand parables.' How different the sentiment of our Lord's thanksgiving: 'I thank thee,

O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.' So in those better times to which Aaron the Karaite now refers.

'And behold, our wise men—on whom be peace!—sought out the right way, abiding by that which is written down in the Book of Truth, and with close investigation and research they were drawn after the words of prophecy, and, by means of faithful interpretation, they attained to wondrous knowledge. Whenever they found it necessary to quote Scripture in any other than its exact literal meaning, they did it plainly, and, being content with what they knew, they restored the Scripture to its own place inviolate. With powerful arguments they overcame those who disputed with them, and worsted them in every encounter, and if ever they found themselves wandering into wild opinions through defect of knowledge, they quickly recovered the right path again. We must therefore judge of them with equity, as of men who never pretended to go beyond the measure of their understanding. The Lord will reward them fully, and they shall be accounted worthy to enjoy salvation and rest.'

Simplicity.

They did not evade the charge of *variations*, which, however, their antagonists pressed on them with malignant exaggeration, as do ours press on us, ridiculously multiplying tenfold the number of our sects, and wilfully ignoring the extent and sincerity of our agreement, in spite of differences.

'But as regards the precepts contained in the Law,—which gladdens the heart and enlightens the eyes,—some of them are *rational* (שִׂכְלִיּוֹת), some *require reflection* (מחשביות), some are *legal* (תוריות), and subject to controversy.

'The rational precepts have relation either to reason or to law. These declare at the same time what is prescribed and what is forbidden.

Rational precepts.

'The characteristic of this class of precepts is that the reason for them is to be ascertained by reflection. Their special applications depend on the known intention of the Law, which is the tree of life to them that lay hold upon it. Inferential.

'The special provisions and injunctions (פרטים) of legal precepts have to be known either by the letter of the Law itself, or by means of prophecy or religious teaching, as God's wisdom may direct. But in truth, whatever exclusively depends upon Divine revelation cannot be comprehended by the human mind; neither is it found out by reasoning, nor by reflection, nor by sense, but the certain knowledge of it proceeds from God, having been revealed to Israel, the chosen of God, who are called by His name, by the hand of the father and chief of prophets. Special.

'Thus we see that the Law is of the kind of things that are received by revelation, and what is only thus received cannot possibly be comprehended, except by the aid of Scripture, from first to last. But when these things are set down in words which the human mind can comprehend, provided they be not lost, they are of the kind intended by the sentence, "O that my words were now written! O that they were printed in a book!" Much more must this be said of words whereof man cannot by himself retain the knowledge. He who gave the Law, seeing in His wisdom that it was true, commanded that it should be written; and, behold! there were graven two tables of stone, for it is said, "And Moses wrote." Again it is said, "That which I have written that thou mayest teach them." And again, "Write thou these words." And again, "Now, therefore, write ye this song for yourselves." And yet again, "Take ye this book of the Law." Thus we see that whatever is a commandment in the Law of God was all written; and how could Must be written.

traditionary questions be settled by a word not written, while one generation goeth and another generation cometh, while knowledge passeth away, and things are altered as chance may be, and the very words of tradition are likely to be all forgotten? But that which is written cannot possibly pass away.

'Now the questions debated between us and the Rabbanites, on account of their traditions concerning the Law, form the subject of three very distinct questions.

'They say that there were some commandments spoken to Moses, besides what were written, that he might deliver them orally again; and that, after delivery by the lips of Moses, they were to be orally transmitted from generation to generation, until a time should come when they would see fit to write them in their books. Now we must press one enquiry:—How did He who gave the Law see fit to deliver some of the commands in writing, and some by tradition, telling the writer of the first that the others must not be seen, while, this notwithstanding, they must be obeyed? And yet God said to Joshua, "This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou must meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein." But if we may depend upon traditions once delivered, what need have we of prophet or of seer? Yet it is said, "All that is written in the book of this Law." Since, then, it is so said, we do not believe that there is any commandment to be delivered by tradition that is not already written in the book of the Law.[1]

First question.

'They say that what is written in the Law requires to be explained by help of oral tradition. But this will not hold good, for the writing constantly agrees with the word spoken by the writer, and therefore the

Second question.

[1] Care should be taken to ascertain how much is meant by תורה (law), and how much by מצוה (commandment).

word spoken must be in agreement with the mind of him who speaks in the volume written. But if the word now spoken does not express the mind of him who then spoke, it will be vain in the estimation of every intelligent and sober-minded person. Now the purport of a sentence may be ascertained in six ways, which are clearly stated by the learned Rabbi Joshua, of blessed memory, in his book entitled "Ariyoth Arubím."[1]

'*First.*—That which is written follows the rules of pronunciation (or ordinary use of language), and these, being clear, will never lead astray. And as the mind of the speaker is expressed in his own language when he speaks intelligently, even so is the mind of the writer shown in his book, if the book be correctly written, provided only that it be so written as to be adapted to the use of those whom it was designed to teach.[2]

'*Second.*—It is necessary to receive the writing as it sounds, that is to say, in its obvious and natural sense, except where the first impression is found to have been manifestly false. The text must be so received when a valid argument does not disprove that first impression; or when there is not another passage disagreeing with it; or

[1] A book on Incests, written by R. Joshua, son of Judah. See the *Bibliotheca Hebraica* of Wolfius, *sub nomine*.

[2] This is a canon of interpretation of the utmost importance to the expositor of Holy Scripture, but it has been utterly neglected by some of the most popular preachers and writers. Without being restrained by this rule, one may range at large in the wilderness of imagination, find much to say, and, if he can select at all, select such as is most in accordance with his preconceived opinions, or his peculiar creed, or the taste of the readers or hearers on whom, perhaps, he depends for food. But to observe this first rule of Rabbi Joshua, he must have acquired for himself, by studying for the love of it, the original language of his text, and whatever else is necessary for a correct understanding of what his text and the context contain. He must have studied the whole Bible in the same spirit, and learned, not only the peculiarities of the sacred writing that engages his present attention, but also what is common to all, and what is peculiar to each of as many others, sacred and profane, as lie within the field of fair comparison.

when there is not found another that resembles it, but departs from its literal meaning, so that you may study how to choose between them. But if there is nothing of the kind, you must take the passage in its literal sense, and not interpret it by any diverse methods. If, however, there is any verbal defect in the reading, or, for example, a servile letter that the student cannot possibly account for as the word stands, then it is impossible to avoid submitting the writing to the discernment of such as are competent to ascertain the meaning by help of some other passage or passages of which the sense is not embarrassed by any like difficulty. Then, as he brings it out by these means, the sense of the Scripture is found, and necessarily established.

'*Third*.—There are also passages free from any defect of word or servile letter, which may nevertheless bear various interpretations, and any one of them correct. But so any one may be questionable, and when regarded from various points of view, may be made the subject of dispute. Careful research, however, will enable us to come to an agreement in a decision obtained by many concurrent evidences.

'*Fourth*.—When a sentence can be equally understood in two acceptations, both consistent with truth, it may be right to receive them both as he commands, there being no contradiction between them. But when there is such a contradiction, it is not possible so to receive it, and then you must incline to that interpretation which has the commendation of analogy, that is to say, which leads you to ascertain some analogy in confirmation. But when they who depend upon tradition in their interpretations of the Law apply their own tradition (or favourite doctrine) to the interpretation of God's written Law, because this interpretation lacks confirmation, or because it presents doubtful aspects, our argument against them is that there

can be no dependence upon any tradition (or teaching) besides that which God Himself gave.

'*Fifth.*—But when the sentence of Scripture is constructed according to the rules of pronunciation (as this phrase is just now explained), and they make use of it in strange ways in delivering some exposition of their own, without any settled principle, we say that this is an erroneous fancy, and that they are taking a way that leads them into error. For every *affirmative sentence* (מאמר גוזר) must have a *subject* and a *predicate* (נושא ונשוא), mutually supporting each other, and the subject of the sentence may possibly comprehend many things, as may likewise the predicate, and this may as well occur in Holy Scripture as in other writings. Then the meaning of the text lies in some one of the many parts of the common subject, but these men take them all within the compass of a single proposition, and confound them in one promiscuous aggregate.

'*Sixth.*—A syllogism should consist of propositions of an equal degree, or you should reason from the lesser to the greater. But these men go hunting after some fanciful similitude of words, not constructing their argument nor making their decision according to the sense of the Law, with research and accuracy, but merely at random, or after their own caprice. They do no more than hunt after transpositions of words or letters, and allegorise by way of guess; for they take the way of allegory in all their opinions. Here we must dispute with them, and ask why the Law does not clearly confirm their words, if they are true, a confirmation which would be quite possible, and very useful, if it could be had, as when, according to what is written, "Moses began to declare[1] this Law." (Deut. i. 5.) What they produce, having altered it from

[1] *To make it clear,* בֵּאֵר, as Moses did in his instructions to the people before his death, when he recapitulated, explained, and enforced the Law.

the Scripture by this method, turns out to be a piece of trifling confusion; but on they still go in the way of their tradition, which is nothing better than a wilful contradiction of Holy Writ. Grievously do they stumble over prophet and seer, until at length they do nothing more than contradict each other, as they all contradict the Word of God. Therefore, wise men with reason cast off all study of tradition, and by relying upon the Scripture only pursue their course in safety.

'They pretend to have authority from the Law itself to add to that which is therein written for command or for prohibition, just as it may seem good to them from generation to generation, imagining this to be justifiable by the following sentence:—"If there shall arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment," or anything above thy knowledge—that is to say, where the letter of the Law is insufficient, or obscure to thy apprehension,—for such a matter it is provided that thou shalt do "according to the Law which they" who study deeply in legal subjects, and search narrowly into the profoundest subtilties, that they may bring every case to a right conclusion, without any carelessness in the judgment they deliver, but by the help of God who is present with such judges,—thou shalt do according to the law which they will teach thee. Their word will be truly spoken. They will not add anything to that which is written in the Law, but only deliver what is thereby made known through research and close investigation. For it is written, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you this day, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." And again, "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

Third question.

'Now it is not the intention of these words that what the priest or the judge may determine shall be excepted from the operation of this precept, for the Scripture speaks

to them all, and requires all alike to "keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in the book of this Law." It may be pleaded that he who daily bends all his powers to research must be constantly renewing his knowledge, and be so advancing from one conjecture to another that in proportion to the diversity of his knowledge will be the abundance of his conjectures. But the answer to such a plea is that, at this rate, there would no longer be one law, nor one judgment concerning the laws existing, nor any certain principle for our guidance in arriving at practical precepts and decisions, the administration of which must depend on order and on time. If they so plead, you must further reply that, as is well known, the same thing will bear to be regarded variously under different aspects without being in the least degree changed in itself, but that wavering conjectures betoken lack of knowledge, and that when conjecture after conjecture has been long indulged, it becomes impossible to distinguish truth from folly. But we must lay firm hold upon truth, for it is pure, and the words of prophecy testify to us what has come to pass in consequence of forsaking the truth. For it was said, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a teaching priest, and without a law." If tradition were anything at all we might place some reliance on it, but, on the contrary, it is mistrusted by the very men that follow it, for the reasons we have already pointed out. Then turn away your face from it. Let us all depend on enquiry and research into the Law that is written, for this is the inheritance of Jacob, as it is said, "And they that understand among the people shall instruct many."

'There was no controversy between Karaites and Rabbanites, after the going forth of Israel into hard and bitter captivity, until the time of the second Temple,[1]

[1] The rebuilding of the temple began B.C. 535.

close upon the days of Ezra,[1] and that controversy could not possibly have arisen had it not been for the knowledge on one side, and confession on the other, of a doubt concerning this very tradition. When vision and prophecy were sealed up, it was well known that the teachers of the Law who came after the prophets were well pleased to strike fear and terror into the hearts of the people, in order to impose their words upon them. Those teachers were used to say of every constitution and ordinance they made that it was received[2] by them from Moses, and this corrupt habit continued in those who followed them. At length, if any one in his perplexity asked a wise man the reason of a decision he had given, the sage would think it a grand thing to reply by tracing it back to Moses, and say, "It is a *halakah*, a decision of Moses from Sinai." And their arrogance became more and more oppressive, until at length they condemned to death[3] every transgressor of their own commands, but as for a transgressor of the commands of God, him they would merely sentence to be whipped with rods.

'Now, this defection from obedience to God's Law came from the perversion of this very sentence, "According to the Law which they shall teach thee." Thus, only to exalt themselves, they struck dread into the people, and declared war against every one that was not entirely at their beck. They exacted from the people whatsoever it pleased them to determine, and those deter-

[1] Ezra went from Babylon to Jerusalem B.C. 457—that is, 78 years after the commencement of building of the second Temple. The controversy, as here supposed, would begin at some time in this interval.

[2] Note the force of St. Paul's claim for acceptance of his teaching concerning the Sacrament of the Eucharist. 'I have *received of the Lord* that which also I have delivered unto you' (1 Cor. xi. 23). To *receive*, in the language of St. Paul, denotes Divine inspiration or gift, by which he received knowledge or grace from *the Lord*, not Moses nor the fathers.

[3] '*We have a law*, and by this law he ought to die.'

minations they were always changing, as we have already shown when speaking of the three questions.

'Rabbanism was established by them in two ways:—*First*, by attributing to our lord Moses—on whom be peace!—every bad imagination of their own hearts; and this was their great offence. *Secondly*, by inflicting the punishment of death on any who should interpret a word of the Law in a sense different from theirs. Thus did they utterly depart out of the right way.

'Then men of integrity, who feared God, and trembled at His word, saw that this was bringing great calamity upon Israel. It was the innovation of an altered Law. Therefore they advised a secession from the innovators, because of their apostasy in all their doctrine from faith in that only which is written in the Law. But in that which all Israelites with one consent confess, and wherein there is no contradiction to the Scripture, there we agree together. The Scripture cannot possibly fail to declare that in which all Israelites are united, for our holy Law comprehends all doctrine, and in it are found the foundations of all instruction.

'But when I look at this dissension, the dire calamity and the disgrace that will afflict both houses of Israel until the Redeemer comes, and when I consider the controversy carried on so stubbornly, all of us waging war with all our powers, army in array against army, battling for the Law which will endure to eternity unchanged, I am resolved to show myself strong in this conflict among men my equals, so far as the Lord shall strengthen my faithful hand to fight. And I will contend both for the fundamental articles of our faith and the true principles of the Unity, and for the true sense and honest study of the precepts of the Law, as they are understood by the *masters of the Reading*—the בעלי מקרא.

'It is the pleasure of the Lord that, for His own

righteousness' sake, the Law shall be magnified; and as great and honourable men have gone before me and displayed admirable knowledge in their valuable writings, I, too, will follow in the same work, to expound their words, and add something to them. I will in this way strengthen the hands of them that seek after righteousness, building up that which is fallen, so far as it shall please the God of Israel to stand by me and assist my efforts.'

In the name of common sense, and in the fear of God, I would commend this teaching of an enlightened Jew to the candid consideration of those who plead for tradition, or human authority, or inner light, as if something were necessary to supply the deficiency, or supplement the incompleteness, as they presume to say, of Holy Scripture.

CHAPTER XIX.

RABBI AARON, SON OF ELIJAH.

His Commentary on the Pentateuch.

THE Rabbi whose work is now before us represents a class of earnest and learned men who were far above the level of their time, of whom Christians hear but little, although they made their influence felt through many generations. Persecuted by their brethren, and having little sympathy with any Gentile people, they stood alone. They did not spring up with a revival of letters, such as took place in Europe in the fifteenth century, nor were they wakened into activity by the excitement of a religious reformation like that of the sixteenth. They flourished most conspicuously while Christendom lay under the deepest shades of mediæval ignorance and superstition, and lost in pagan-like idolatry. By the time that printing was introduced into Europe from China, their light was nearly quenched, and before it could serve them in the lands where their synagogues yet continued they had nearly dwindled away into extinction. Very few of their works have yet been printed, but the authors of works now forgotten were precursors of all the eminent Rabbinical Hebrew commentators whose writings have been perpetuated by the united care of Jews and Christians, and printed, with or without translations and learned notes, again and again. The spirit of reverence for the God of truth alone which

distinguished their fathers, actuated also the most successful Christian teachers. The principle of literal interpretation, defined and guarded as it is by Rabbi Aaron and other Karaites, is identical with that of the greatest scholars and most successful critics of the present age.

We wonder, for a moment, that the Karaites did not advance just another step, and cross the threshold of the Church; but our wonder ceases when we call to mind that the Church of those times, with exception of a few persecuted followers of Christ—and even that exception was very partial—was faulty in doctrine, unscriptural in discipline, idolatrous in worship, utterly uncharitable in spirit, and bitterly cruel to the Jews. Its ministers were, with extremely few exceptions, incompetent to instruct an intelligent Jewish enquirer, or to defend the Gospel from his objections, and seldom thought of silencing the objector by any other method than violence. The sincere conversion of a Jew was, therefore, a rare miracle of the grace of God, occurring but just often enough to afford proof of the Saviour's power to win souls in spite of hindrances insuperable to human wisdom. Meanwhile the Karaites had a mission to fulfil among their brethren the Jews in general, and, if I mistake not, they effected a signal change in the sacred literature of their nation, which was preparatory to greater changes, and it is evident that such changes have already taken place and are now in progress. One very brief specimen of Karaite commentary will exhibit clearly what I mean.

Professor Kosegarten, in the work before us, gives some extracts from R. Aaron's commentary on the Pentateuch, contained in a manuscript in the library of the University of Jena, with a Latin translation and historical and critical notes. The first extract consists of the Rabbi's notes on the first verse of the Book of Genesis. Short as the text is, the notes cover at least five large

quarto pages with solid letter-press, in small Rabbinical Hebrew character. This diffuseness is exceptional, but is accounted for partly by the Jewish custom of enlarging on the first sentences of the sacred volume, and partly by the author's desire to set forth as explicitly as possible the Karaite faith concerning the Creation, to counteract the slanderous report that the Karaites were tainted with Sadducean unbelief. There is a separate disquisition on each word.

Concerning the first word, *In-the-beginning*, there is a stout controversy. Some take it to be *in state of construction*, and others consider that it is *absolute*. בְּרֵאשִׁית Each commentator adapts his comment to his own views, or those of his party, concerning the Creation. Our Rabbi quotes and criticises eight of them, four being Rabbanites and four Karaites, no two agreeing on all points, but when all are called forth to deliver their opinions, exhibiting so lively a picture of dissension as must have put the readers of either party on their guard against trusting to their learned men for anything approaching to common consent in regard to the first articles of common faith. Here are the eight discordant doctors:—

Aben Ezra, a Rabbanite, believes the word to be in constructive with 'create,' and would read accordingly, 'When He began to create heaven and earth,' God said, 'Let there be light.' But Aaron objects that this would disagree with the fact that the earth already existed, although as yet in a state of emptiness and confusion, and the waters also, but in darkness, before light was. Light, therefore, was produced, not when God began to create, but actually had created both the heavens and the earth.

R. Shemaryah, a Karaite, renders it, with a subaudition, 'In the beginning of time' God created the heavens and

the earth. But to say that in the beginning *of time* God created would so limit the act of creation as to affirm that it was not continued within the course of time, whereas Moses affirms the contrary, describing the successive acts of creation as continued *in* time, while six days were measured by morning dawn and nocturnal shadow.

R. Solomon Yarkhi, a Rabbanite, also taking the word in constructive, would render it thus: 'When God *first* created the heavens and the earth.' But that would be absurd; for if the heavens and the earth were *first* created, the creation of them must have been the work of the first day, whereas the inspired record reveals that the creation was not finished until the end of the sixth day.

R. Joshua, son of Judah, a Karaite, is very bold. Supposing the text to be incomplete, he presumes the word חַי (*living*) to be understood, and taken into construction with בְּרֵאשִׁית. Having thus restored the text, as he conceives, he translates it easily, to this effect: 'When first there existed any living thing,'—that is to say, any angel,—' God created the heavens and the earth.' But, although it is true that angels did exist before the material creation, as we learn from Holy Scripture, it is not permitted to represent as a textual reading what is not written in the text, and ridiculous to comment on the invention.

R. Moses, son of Maimon, a Rabbanite of world-wide celebrity, understands the word to be written absolutely, and pronounces it to mean that God created the heavens and the earth, '*with their first principles*'—that is to say, with the simple elements and spirits of the spheres, which are to the universe what the heart is to an animated body. He arrived at this novel conception by an ingenious process. *First*, he thought, necessarily implied *last*. First

and last presuppose *time*. Time is the effect of *motion*. Motion cannot be until there are spheres to revolve; then time begins. 'In-the-beginning,' therefore, signifies the intellectual principle of the universe, and the particle *beth* is equivalent with the adverb *when*. R. Aaron does not condescend to argue against this vain philosophy.

R. Moses, son of Nakhman, a learned Rabbanite, reads the word absolutely, and determines it to mean that 'first of all' God made the heavens and the earth. But this would imply a succession of creations, and we know of nothing new-created since God finished the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them.

R. Judah of Toledo, a Rabbanite, supposes that the Creator 'at first' made an incorporeal or immaterial universe, out of which the corporeal or material was afterwards brought into existence. R. Judah fancied he could find a text of Solomon on which to impose a meaning of the sort, but that was a mere Cabbalistic trifle, and R. Aaron quickly disposes of his fancy by observing that Moses distinctly describes the creation of a material world.

R. Aaron, son of Joseph, a Karaite, thinks the word is used *impropriè*, by a prophetic licence, things that are not being sometimes called by name like things that are. Before the Creation, he says, time was not, but 'beginning' is a relative term, only proper to be used when there also is an end. But as end came not until after the heavens and the earth were made, when God had not yet done any more than set His hand to frame the universe, it was not truth to say that there was a beginning.

Such were the vagaries in which Rabbanites and Karaites alike disported, and if the latter took so great licence after the simple method of which they boasted, and for which their fathers endured so great reproach, it

is for R. Aaron, the son of Elijah, in the year 1360, to recall them to the way of truth and common sense. This he laboured to do, and after refuting their eight wise men one by one, he proceeds to record his own sense of the first important word, in the terms following:—

'I will now explain the word as I understand it. The Most High God is pleased so to order and direct the affairs of men that they may receive from the Divine Perfection what they cannot find in any human perfection, unless it be under the influence of prophetic grace. Yet no prophecy was ever worthy to be trusted, unless it was attended with evidences of concurring providence, nor could a providence exist at all unless the world had a Creator. But in these days men have openly denied that the world was made, because, as they say, they see things come into being and pass away again in such an established course that they believe everything comes from something else, and is turned into something else again. They, therefore, maintain that the world must necessarily be just as it is; that it cannot be changed, nor be any other than it is. Therefore Moses, our master, began his discourse with these words that we find written: "In the beginning God created." For he desired to teach men that the world is the workmanship of God, that it does not wear the form in which it now appears, as if it had received it from intermediate or secondary causes, but that it was, at first, brought into existence out of nothing, mere nothing, complete as a centre with its circle, since all things were created without the aid of any means or second causes. Whatever works the Most High finished in the six days of the creation, they all arose from the power of that first creative energy, and when they were finished, then was the world established and set in order so firmly that all things could be perpetuated by the agency of second causes. This He taught in the words,

"The heavens were finished, and the earth, with all the host of them," that is to say, all things which were at first brought into existence, without the aid of second causes.

'But the word "In-the-beginning" refers to the time when the world was placed under the laws by which it is now governed, as is intimated plainly by the words, "which God created, *to make*, לעשות," or to be made by procreation, or otherwise by reproduction. The word "In-the-beginning," therefore, is applied to all things which are after specified, until the last word, which declares that they were finished, that is to say, whatever is included in the one sentence, "In six days God created the heavens and the earth."'

After stating and confuting various versions of the Hebrew word which we translate by the verb *to create*, each of which conveys a different notion of creation, our commentator gives what he considers the true meaning. As he has already insisted, it means 'to produce something without any mediate aid.' The elements, as he explains, were produced out of mere nothing. So did He produce living things and man, for it is evident that they were brought into existence at once by the power of God, none helping. The same word is also employed to signify the creation of man and of the inferior animals; but of the vegetable world, which was produced out of the earth, Moses does not say that God created it, but that he *made* the earth *bring forth*[1] grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit. בָּרָא

His notes on the remaining words are commonplace. The name of the Creator he derives from אֱלָהּ, and writes אֱלוֹהַּ in the singular. In the plural form he considers that it denotes multitude, although it אֱלֹהִים

[1] This is an oversight. In the narrative of the creation Moses uses this same verb הוציא (*cause to bring forth*) in describing the production of animals.

is a fundamental article of faith that God is One, and the Jew maintains that He cannot be united with any other, a proposition which may be true or false according to the terms in which it is stated. The plurality here signified he will not acknowledge to be that of persons, but of perfections, his doctrine of the Godhead being in all points the same as that of other Jews. He makes no allusion to Christianity, but notices the Persian dualism, which he considers a corruption of the revealed doctrine of Satan as the enemy of God. He thinks that the Divine Unity is expressed by the construction of a noun in the plural form with a verb in the singular.[1]

On the name of *heaven* he has nothing to say beyond unscientific etymological speculations, which have obtained a certain currency and held undisturbed possession in quarters where studies are very superficial, for the reason, perhaps, that they serve for harmless entertainment, and are too trifling to be seriously refuted. אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם

As to *the earth*, he makes but one observation of sufficient interest to be noted, and that is to the effect that, although earth is mentioned after heaven, the heavens and the earth were created at the same time, inasmuch as they are inseparably related, as are the circle and the centre,—an entire whole, of which the parts are essential and inevitably co-existent,—the universe. וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ

The second specimen given by Kosegarten consists of notes on the forty-ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis, which might have been written by any orthodox Jew

[1] The Christian doctrine—the revealed verity—that there are Three Persons in One Godhead, as this doctrine is expounded by Athanasius, set forth in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and confirmed more and more to the reason and heart of the believer by study of the Holy Scriptures, is not promoted by speculations upon Hebrew nouns. The form of אלהים is plural, no doubt, as is the form of several other nouns having no plurality in them, and this accident is not peculiar to the Hebrew language, but occurs in others—in Gothic and English, for example.

without offence to his brethren. Like the chief Rabbanite expositors, and like the Christians, he interprets the prediction of a Shiloh that should come to signify the Messiah, and the interpretation is obviously just.

A third specimen is Rabbi Aaron's comment on the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, containing Moses' blessing on the children of Israel before his death. Some observation on part of his note on a sentence in the fourth verse, 'Moses commanded us a law,' may assist us in our review of the doctrine and spirit of Karaism. An attentive perusal, however, shows that while this diligent commentator bestowed great care on the exposition of the distinctive characteristics of his own community, he was in other respects altogether a Jew. The Law, he believed, was binding upon all mankind, but the Israelites only were worthy to receive it, and to be its custodians to the end of time. The merit began with Abraham, of whom the Lord said, 'I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him.' (Gen. xviii. 19.) They gave evidence that they were worthy of the trust when they promised Moses that they would do all that the Lord had said, and be obedient. (Exod. xxiv. 7.) Assurance was given them repeatedly that the Law of God should be their perpetual heritage, unchangeable and immovable. (Levit. iii. 17; Deut. xxix. 15, xxxiii. 4.) But this same man, whose perception is so keen and reasoning so conclusive when he applies himself to controversy with the Rabbanites in defence of the supreme and sole authority of God's written Law, and whose learning seems to raise him high above the level of his generation when he confutes the speculations of friend and foe alike on a point that interests him as a Karaite, forgets his learned jealousy in defence of truth when he speaks only as a Jew. He even forgets, what elsewhere he demonstrates, how utterly the members of Abraham's household after

him fell away from the teaching of their father; how shamefully the whole people of Israel apostatised from the Law they swore to keep and to obey. He clings with such a blind tenacity to the promises of perpetuity to his nation which attended the precious gift of the oracles of God, that he forgets the conditions constantly coupled with the promises, and makes quite sure that the Gentiles will never be admitted to a participation of the honour, the eternal and unchanging honour, of being the Lord's peculiar people.

When driven for self-defence to think deeply and to clothe his thoughts in well-considered words, his intellect is wakeful and style vigorous; but no sooner has he done this and returned to the common field of Judaism than his powers revert into the normal condition of indifference, the veil drops upon his heart again, and, whatever we may infer from the opposing aspects of his case, this at least we learn, that no man can study God's Word successfully who is not in earnest.

I must now leave Aaron the Jew, and return to Aaron the Karaite. The distinctive characteristics of the Karaite commentator, and of other advocates of the same system, were no doubt communicated to the Rabbanites, whose more enlightened labours have been welcomed by Christian scholars for ages past. The Rabbinical commentaries which bear the name of Kimkhi, Yarkhi, Aben Ezra, Saadiah, and a few others, would not have been what they are if Karaite opposition had not put those learned Jews on their guard against the Rabbanistic illusions of their dark times, and if some of them had not actually sat at the feet of Karaite masters. Aaron, as I have observed, did not shock his compeers by betraying—so far as appears now—any liking for Christianity, or any deficiency of purely Jewish zeal, or at least any appearance of the kind. He pursued,

whether consciously or unconsciously, the routine of unthinking repetition when there was no present motive to the contrary. When such a motive did exist, he used great plainness of speech, and we can freely acknowledge that, under God, the Karaite *simple method* was the means of gradually weaning the Jewish people from inordinate admiration of the Talmud, and preparing the Jewish mind for the reformations of the nineteenth century. Let any one contrast those valuable commentaries with such volumes as the 'Midrash Rabboth,' and he will perceive the force of this remark. But let it be borne in mind that, when I speak of the reformations of the present century, I speak with careful discrimination, and regard the current events of the present century as tending to the firmer establishment of Faith, in the loftiest and fullest acceptance of the word.

A new field of Hebrew literature is now thrown open to the researches of the learned. Biblical scholars and Jewish antiquarians may now vie with each other in the diligent exploration of recently discovered treasures. The fragments of Karaite antiquity collected by Firkowitsch, and assorted by Pinsker and by many who already emulate him in this work, begin to yield the promise of an abundant harvest, and the time cannot be far distant when collections of great literary and historical value will be put into our hands. Much will then be learned of the doings and sufferings of a people existing almost out of sight and thought of the Western world, those patient sons of the Reading who now seem to live again for our instruction. Not that they are likely to add much to our store of Old Testament exposition, but they can scarcely fail to contribute valuable intelligence concerning the Israelitish dispersion in remote regions of the world.

The slight taste of Karaite authorship afforded to the

readers in these last two chapters may be sufficient for my present purpose; but for the Jews, especially those of them who apply themselves to Hebrew studies, precious material for the enlargement of this branch of their literature and history is accessible. By its aid, the Jewish mind will certainly be turned into new channels. By the discovery of commentaries like the one which I have now so briefly quoted, they may perhaps turn afresh with less bias to the study of the original text, and we shall be thankful to accept from their hands additional means for doing the same thing with good effect.

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